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CHURCH HISTORY  
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OF THE MIDDLE WEST

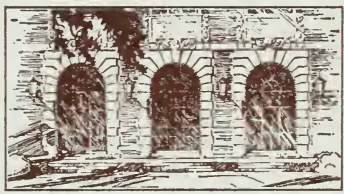
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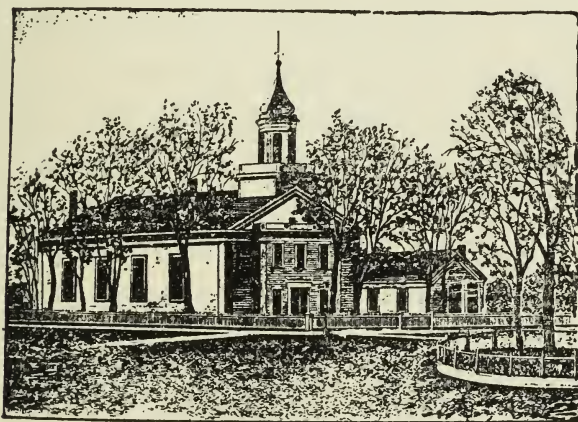


CHURCH HISTORY

IN A PURITAN COLONY  
OF THE MIDDLE WEST

*CENTENNIAL  
LECTURES*

HERMANN RICHARD MUELDER




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# The Frontiers of American Christianity

## LECTURE I

**I**NSTITUTIONS such as schools and churches are in a sense social habits. That is, they are the manners of certain groups—the collective behavior to which people are accustomed and to which they normally adhere. These social habits which we call institutions are like the habits of individuals in that they ordinarily do not break off abruptly or even change very quickly unless some unusual influence affects them. In an old, well-established, stable and homogeneous community, such institutions remain essentially the same, with only gradual modifications from year to year and even from generation to generation.

When people move from one environment to another they take their social habits with them, and in their new surroundings their old institutions will tend to reappear. But they reappear under new conditions. The new environment may be so unfavorable as to stifle institutions of the kind that prospered under the old. Even if they survive under the new conditions they will be very susceptible to change in their early history.

It is just such a transplanting of institutions which is involved in the founding of Knox College and the churches associated with its early history. This problem of the transferring of such schools and churches from the East to the West I wish to deal with in the first two lectures of this series. There are three phases to that problem:

1. What were Presbyterian and Congregational religious and educational institutions like in the old, well-established communities along the eastern sea-coast?

2. What was the nature of the environment in the West to which they were being transplanted, particularly as to the possible effect of that environment upon certain important features of those institutions?

3. By what means were those old institutions transplanted to the new environment?

The first two of those questions are the subject of tonight's lecture.

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Before proceeding, however, it must be explained that the use of the word Presbyterian in the first lecture is in a sense inaccurate. It will mean those settlers which preferred the religious practices of either Congregationalists or Presbyterians. For reasons which will be taken up in the next lecture the term Presbyterian became ambiguous and sometimes meant what you and I today would say was Congregational.

### I.

Now then, our first question: What were the Presbyterian and Congregational institutions of the East like?

One of their most striking characteristics was a fine tradition of learned men and fine educational institutions. This tradition went back beyond Princeton, Yale and Harvard, to the scholars of Cambridge, England and of Edinburgh, Scotland. In that tradition lay the learning of men such as John Calvin, whose *Institutes of Christianity* must be matched with books like *The Wealth of Nations*, *The Origin of Species*, or *Das Kapital* in its influence upon Occidental civilization. In it also lay the erudite poetry of John Milton; or the prolific scholarship of Cotton Mather, first American to be elected a fellow of the Royal Society in England; or the philosophical works of what some historians regard the finest mind that ever appeared in America, that of Jonathan Edwards.

In accordance with this heritage the Congregationalists and Presbyterians expected that their clergymen be properly educated, strictly selected and formally inducted into the pastoral office. The minister was not to them a member of an ordinary profession. He should stand first in the community, set apart by his distinguished manners and scholarly habits as well as by his high calling. In order to support him and to maintain the church building, the communicants were held strictly accountable for their shares of the financial burdens of the society. Money sufficient for the needs of the group was raised by sale of pews or by assessments almost as systematic and inescapable as taxes; in fact, until the year Illinois became a state, Connecticut still taxed people for the support of its Puritan churches, and Massachusetts did not revoke such taxation until 1833.

The religious services conducted by such carefully prepared and well-supported ministers were performed with great decorum, sobriety, and formality. The preacher delivered a carefully prepared, substantial, and polished discourse. Extempore or unrestrained emotional displays, such as often characterized religious revivals, were disliked whether they came

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from listener or preacher. Even during the Great Awakening of the eighteenth century had this been true: the revival was condemned by a ministerial convention in Massachusetts; both Harvard and Yale condemned the evangelical methods of Whitfield; and the latter school actually expelled two students for attending a meeting of the pro-revival party. Even the great Edwards was put on the defensive by his approval of religious "enthusiasm."

The government and business of the churches were carried on in the same decorous and thorough-going fashion. The careful arrangements about finances have already been mentioned. Similarly careful were rules concerning admission to membership in the churches. Furthermore, the conditions of membership were fully enforced, and deviation from standards of piety, orthodoxy, or morality was almost certain to mean discipline at the hands of a duly constituted church court.

### II.

Such briefly, was the nature of the Congregational and Presbyterian institutions in the East. Now, what was the nature of the religious environment into which they would need to be transplanted?

What some of the hardships were in the way of establishing schools and churches in the new settlements is suggested by this extract from the journal of that great Methodist itinerant, Francis Asbury, made while he was traveling in Tennessee in 1803:

What a detail of sufferings might I give, fatiguing to me to write, and perhaps to my friends to read . . . No room to retire to—that in which you sit common to all—crowded with women and children—the fire occupied by cooking—much and loved solitude not to be found, unless you choose to run out into the rain, in woods; six months in the year I have had, for thirty-two years, occasionally to submit to what will never be agreeable to me. . . . The people, it must be confessed, are amongst the kindest souls in the world. But kindness will not make a crowded log cabin, twelve by ten, agreeable. . . . Within [are] six adults, and as many children, one of which is all motion; the dogs, too, must sometimes be admitted. On Saturday . . . I found that amongst my other trials, I had taken the itch; and considering the filthy houses and filthy beds I have met with . . . it is perhaps strange that I have not caught it twenty times. I do not see that there is any security against it, but by sleeping in a brimstone shirt.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Francis Asbury, *The Journal of the Rev. Francis Asbury, Bishop of the Methodist Episcopal Church* (1821) III, 118-119.

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It is quite evident that such trials would not appeal to the ordinary college graduate and seminary-trained preacher of the older communities of the East. Even if he were willing to endure such discomforts and deprivations, he still might not be able to adjust himself and his office to such different conditions. To the sects that were most successful so far as numbers were concerned in the West, namely the Methodists and the Baptists, the finding of ministers fitted to the environment was not a problem. Their pastors sprang from the frontier itself, and were accustomed to its hardships and to the peculiarities of the settlers. Contrasts between college-bred, tender-foot clergymen from the East and the uneducated preachers out of the West creep often into the religious literature of the time. A Baptist in Kentucky explained that the Presbyterian preachers were less successful because they had been too long in schools and that as a consequence their bodily strength had been emaciated so that they could not endure back-woods hardships. Furthermore, he asserted, they could not mingle easily with a lower class of people, for "tempers soured at the loss of society to which their habits were assimilated."

Church life was, of course, subject to the crude make-shifts that at first took the place of church buildings. The first religious services would probably be held in the diminutive log hut of a settler, or perhaps in the largest room, likely the bar-room of a tavern, or during mild weather beneath overhanging trees or an arbor made of branches of trees. If the settlement was not altogether new the court-house or school might be used. Very often the first edifice designed primarily for religious purposes was a "union" building erected through the co-operation of a number of denominations in the neighborhood. At best, the surroundings would be rough and crude, and liturgical accoutrements lacking. Simple as were the sacramental paraphernalia of the Protestants they might be difficult to supply: Baptists might have to break the ice in a creek for immersion of a convert; the Galesburg settlers make the wine for their first Lord's Supper from raisins.

Not infrequently, these physical crudities were accompanied by physical violence. Autobiographies and memoirs of frontier preachers often mention acts of violence. Young ruffians might waylay the preacher whose homily had given them offense. In 1825 a Methodist clergyman in Illinois killed in self-defense a man who entered his room at night to attack him for something in his sermon. Frontier rowdies might break up a meeting by riding their horses into the church, by building a fire of

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leather rubbish below the loose-planked floor, by conducting a dance on the boards above, or by some other wild prank.

Perhaps the most impressive, if not the most important, illustration of the crudities in the frontier churches was the careless use of the tobacco-chewing habit by both laity and clergy. Probably this was most true of the more popular sects; the Methodist Annual Conference of Indiana in 1843 resolved that the ministers of that body should discourage the indulgence of the practice in houses of worship by precept and *example*. That Presbyterian ministers, however, accommodated themselves to the habit in at least one part of the West is suggested in an essay by the president of a Tennessee college:

To what extent the hospitable citizens of New York and Philadelphia are annoyed in this respect by their western friends, whenever the latter travel Eastward can scarcely be conceived . . . How completely *horrifying* to a fashionable lady to see . . . the invited guest of her honoured spouse, from the far West, bespattering her brilliant mahogany and marble and Brussels with tobacco juice, as unceremoniously as he would inundate the plank floor of a log cabin. Western parsons are especially noted for their gifts in this species of holding forth; and they never fail, during their annual visits to Philadelphia, to leave an odour of their out-pourings so remarkably impressive and affecting as seldom to be effaced or forgotten. Whether their pulpit displays are equally potential or memorable, my reminiscences do not enable me to decide.<sup>1</sup>

It was natural that under such conditions there developed among the settlers a strong preference not for decorous and restrained church meetings, but for extremely informal and unrestrained religious services. The best-known manifestations of this spirit are the camp-meetings, but what were to more staid Christians disorderly displays of emotion also often characterized the smaller and regular meetings of the sects that prospered most on the frontier. The disposition of Presbyterian and Congregational clergymen to discourage such behavior injured their popularity. It was complained against them that they "trammeled the freedom with which sincere and warm-hearted people delighted to worship God" by reprimanding such things as shouting, "the twitching of muscles, falling on the meeting-house floor, or the spontaneous exhortation of a 'happy' brother or sister."

<sup>1</sup>Philip Lindsley, "The American is a Spitting Animal," *Works*, edited by LeRoy J. Halsey (1866), III.

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Another common characteristic of the frontier religious mood was the dislike of sermons delivered from manuscript or notes. This prejudice was most likely to embarrass the young preacher fresh from Princeton or Yale, and accustomed to well-polished discourses which were not to be made as "spontaneous exhortations." One of the most vivid recollections of a founder of Knox's sister college at Jacksonville was the way he shocked his audience by using a manuscript during his first sermon in that place in 1829. A contemporary Baptist complained that such carefully prepared sermons put the "hay too high in the rack." The *Methodist Quarterly Review* in the late twenties noted that there was no particular objection to written sermons, but stated that in the West they were not "our best holt." The famous itinerant preacher of that sect, Peter Cartwright, described what he termed the "dismal" conditions existing in a colony of Yankees in Ohio, and remarked:

They could not bear loud and zealous sermons and they brought their learned preachers with them, and they read their sermons and were always criticising us poor backwoods preachers.<sup>1</sup>

The Reverend George Washington Gale encountered this attitude early in his ministry while acting as missionary to frontier settlements in New York. He was taunted with this practice of his denomination, being told that the sermons were all written in New England and given to the preachers to use.

Perhaps even more serious was a prevailing frontier prejudice against salaried preachers. The young seminary graduate of the East was accustomed to expect a stated congregational relationship which was more or less permanent and which assured him a regular, sufficient income. If he went West he found that the dominant popular opinion was opposed to such arrangements. The minister was expected to work for a part or even for all of his sustenance. Among Baptists this was very often true. The traveling preacher of the Methodists was assured a meagre salary but he was obliged to move on to another circuit in about two years. Furthermore, that denomination had an entire order of lay or local preachers who got no pay at all. In 1817 when Gale went out as a Congregational-Presbyterian home missionary he found the Baptists in the settlements ahead of him. They made fun of his missionary efforts, saying that even if he did establish churches, he could not get pastors for

<sup>1</sup>Peter Cartwright, *Autobiography*.



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them. The first question that would arise would be that of salary, and if the new preacher was not satisfied he would desert his charge. When a Presbyterian preacher in Kentucky by the name of Rice tried to collect his salary by denying the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, the following was written about him by some frontier versifier:

### On Parson R-e

Who refused to perform Divine Service till his arrears were paid.

Ye fools! I told you once or twice,  
You'd hear no more of canting R-e.  
He cannot settle his affairs,  
Nor pay attention unto prayers,  
Unless you pay up your arrears.  
O, he would, in pulpit storm,  
And fill all hell with dire alarm!  
Vengeance pronounce against each vice.  
And more than all, cursed avarice.  
Preached money was the root of ill,  
Consign'd each rich man unto hell;  
But since he finds you will not pay,  
Both rich and poor may go that way. . . <sup>1</sup>

Another circumstance that might disturb an Easterner who accorded high social position and esteem to men of the cloth was the lack of any necessary reverence for the ministerial profession in the West. In many circles there was a positive dislike even for clerical titles such as "Reverend" or "Doctor of Divinity." Several Baptist sects resolved against the use of such titles. The Methodist Episcopal General Conference in 1832 seriously debated a proposal to forbid ministers to become D.D.s. Those two academic initials Peter Cartwright defined as "Double Deuce, or doctor of devilsh doctrines."

The western antipathy for educated preachers and the institutions they had attended has been suggested at several points in the preceding discussion. It requires special emphasis, however, that the minister who could boast, as was often done, that he had never rubbed his back against a college, had the popular advantage. Preachers boasted that before preaching they had not "swallowed a dictionary." Ministers with formal seminary training were compared to "lettuce growing in the shade of a peach tree." Under these circumstances it is not surprising that religious schools had to overcome considerable public opposition. When Edward

<sup>1</sup>J. H. Spencer, *History of the Kentucky Baptists*, I, 559-560.

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Beecher set out to get a charter for Illinois College, popular prejudice crystalized into the allegation that his enterprise was a scheme by Eastern capitalists to buy up Illinois land, populate it with tenants, control the politics of the state and destroy freedom of religion. It was only after he had formed a "Ring" with three other religious schools that wanted charters that he secured his end. Even then the charters were granted on the two conditions that the schools were to possess only one section of land, and were not to establish a theological department. Perhaps Knox had less difficulty in securing its charter in 1837 because this precedent had been set in the early thirties.

The foregoing description of the religious frontier suffices, I think, to show the real obstacles that Congregational and Presbyterian institutions would need to overcome. By what agencies and devices it was done will be discussed in the second lecture.

### SOURCES.

A bibliography of the many details of frontier religious life suggested in this lecture has no place here. The sources are too numerous. A critical list of such materials will be found in an unpublished dissertation by the author: *Jacksonian Democracy in Religious Organization*, in the University of Minnesota Library.

# The Westward Extension of the Puritan Churches

## LECTURE II

IN my last lecture I contrasted the traditional culture of the Congregational and Presbyterian institutions of the eastern sea-board with the religious customs of the western frontier in which they were to be established. On the one hand, I indicated the fine educational and ecclesiastical traditions of those institutions; on the other hand, I described the crude and even hostile conditions on the frontier. An appreciation of that contrast was necessary in order that you might realize how serious was the problem of transplanting Congregational and Presbyterian churches and schools to the West.

The lecture tonight will discuss the methods by which the transplanting was done. Obviously, the methods would have much to do with the success of that transplanting. Furthermore, an understanding of the process will clear up a lot of loose thinking about the origin and early history of Galesburg, for that can be understood only with a knowledge of the complicated connections of Presbyterianism and Congregationalism during those years.

From the point of view of the quality of that transplanting, the best kind of migration of people and their institutions is by means of colonies, for they bring about an uninterrupted continuance of old conventions, traditions, and standards. Colonies were groups of persons who knew each other well in their old homes, who organized before they came west, and who had a compact, well-ordered community as soon as they settled. There was a considerable amount of such colony migration on the part of pioneers of the New England tradition. The Galesburg settlers were a good example. The historical background of that kind of colony migration, its methods, and its importance, we will deal with in my next lecture.

Tonight, however, we will deal with the problem of Congregational

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and Presbyterian expansion from the point of view of quantity rather than of kind. If the educational and ecclesiastical ideals of those sects were to be important in the western settlements they would somehow have to keep up with the rapidly advancing frontier, or else become so insignificant as to have little influence.

Let me show you how great the quantity—the geographical extent and population—of migration was during the period that Galesburg and Knox College were being founded. The first three centuries of the white man's occupation of the territory now comprising the United States had been relatively slow. It was not until three hundred years after Columbus discovered a West Indian island that the first state was organized west of the Allegheny Mountains. In 1800 there were still only 5000 settlers in all of what is Indiana and Illinois now. Even then, however, there was beginning an astounding human migration. It was at times to be almost pell-mell; the vast number of migrants did not wait to organize in colonies. By 1809 there were enough people to separate Illinois Territory from Indiana Territory, by 1812 enough to give the former their own elective General Assembly, and six years later enough to justify the existence of Illinois as a separate state standing equally with the older states of the East. By the time the Civil War broke out that new state, which stood last in population in 1820, stood fourth in population.—You must see how important it was that any institutions which were to have a significant place in the new country should adjust themselves to expansion so tremendous in its geographical scope and numerical magnitude.

First of all, to understand the methods of transplanting Congregational and Presbyterian schools and churches it is essential to know something about the government of those denominations. To most of you matters of ecclesiastical organization may seem a terrific bore, but it must be emphasized that a hundred years ago differences in church government were still generally regarded as of great consequence. Our generation has forgotten that peculiarities of church polity gave several of the great denominations their very names; Episcopal, Methodist Episcopal, Presbyterian and Congregational all are names denoting the form of church government.

A century ago there was under way among Congregationalists and Presbyterians a serious and very confusing controversy over their denominational organizations. Presbyterians were accused of harboring an "elective aristocracy" similar to what the Federal Government would have

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been if the President and senators were chosen for life. The Presbyterian polity was described as an "oligarchical form of government" to be compared only adversely with the "pure form of democracy" characterizing Congregationalism. In answer to these charges, Presbyterians asserted that the other sect was only a "horde of petty democracies" which permitted "popular control without limitations" and which tended to "anarchy" in large bodies. It was said that Congregationalism tolerated "radicalism," and that unlike Presbyterianism it subjected the rights of the individual to the "mere will of the majority." It lacked the means to curb a "turbulent, democratic, fanatical spirit."

### I.

What were the differences between Congregationalism and Presbyterianism which made such a great difference one hundred years ago?

The Congregational scheme was simple. Control of religious affairs was left entirely to each local church. There were associations of churches but they had no real governing power; they were only advisory bodies through which the local churches could, if they wished, co-operate. There was nothing at all in the way of an elaborate machinery of central control.

The Presbyterian scheme of government was more complex. Instead of the decentralized, loosely-connected system of the Congregationalists, the Presbyterians enjoyed the benefits of a centrally supervised, well coordinated, strongly governed organization. The local congregation was governed by the so-called *church-session*, which was composed of the pastor and the *ruling elders*. The latter were chosen by the congregation, but if their characters, piety, and orthodoxy remained unimpaired they held office for life.—Immediately superior to the congregation with its governing *church session* was the *presbytery*. It was constituted of the pastors and *ruling elder* delegates from the churches of the region over which the *presbytery* had jurisdiction. This body examined and ordained candidates for the ministry, kept an eagle eye on the doings of the congregations, and entertained judicial appeals from decisions of the *church session*. This tribunal also attempted to allocate at least some ministerial service to churches or localities without pastors.

Superior to the *presbyteries* were the *synods*, usually one or more in each state. It was their function to serve as a higher court of appeal from the *presbyteries*, to maintain some administrative supervision over them, and to legislate on regional matters. The *synod* was also composed of

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pastors and of *ruling elder* delegates.

Above the *synods* was the *General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States*. This was the supreme governing body. It met annually, during most of the pre-Civil War period, at Philadelphia. It administered the common interests of the denomination throughout the country; it legislated on questions of fundamental importance to all; it was the ultimate court of appeal from *synods* and its decisions were part of the supreme law of the sect.

In its complexity and centralization this Presbyterian system was obviously the antithesis of Congregationalism. It was here that the two denominations really differed, for though the Congregationalists tended to be somewhat more liberal in their interpretation of doctrines, the sects had substantially the same creed. The serious difference between them was in church government.

### II.

Different though they were, both systems were alike in that at first they failed to adjust themselves to the tremendous westward expansion that was under way by 1800. The Congregationalists suffered from their lack of sufficient denominational machinery for activities of a national rather than a local scope, and many of their leaders felt that their polity was not so well fitted to the heterogeneous western settlements as was that of the Presbyterians. There were hardly any Congregational churches in Illinois before 1830. The Presbyterians, on the other hand, with their strong but rigid denominational organization, also failed at first to meet the exigencies of the frontier.

Their failure was well brought out by events connected with the Great Revival in the western settlements that came to a head about the year 1801. This great emotional religious upheaval left thousands of people clamouring for churches to join and ministers to serve them. When the Presbyterian church failed to adapt itself to the requirements of the situation, trouble resulted among its western communicants. In Kentucky a Presbyterian preacher, the Rev. Barton W. Stone, and four other preachers of that sect had entered heartily into the Great Revival and had co-operated with Methodists and Baptists in the huge camp-meetings that the movement developed. Caught by the spirit of these popular religious institutions which transcended denominational distinctions, they preached "free salvation to all men on the same conditions," a tenet contrary to the Calvinistic principle that only the elect of God could be saved. For

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this deviation from orthodoxy, and because they condoned the emotional irregularities attending the revival meetings, the Rev. Stone and the four other Presbyterian preachers who stood with him were condemned by most of their colleagues and one of them was cited to be tried for heresy. All of the five then drew up a "Declaration of Independence" and the people in their congregations seceded with them. What they thought of the Presbyterian mode of government they showed by drawing up a "Last Will and Testament" over their presbytery, by doing away with any central governing bodies or special religious authority on the part of clergymen, and by expressing a hope that the Synod of Kentucky would keep on suspending heretics "in order that the oppressed may go free, and taste the sweets of gospel liberty."

These incidents revealed that it would be well for the success of Presbyterianism in the expanding West if it would relax the rigidity of its polity in the direction of more local freedom, as was the mode of Congregationalism. This, as we shall see, was done.

Another problem that was aggravated by the Great Revival was the supplying of preachers to the frontier. As we have noted, Presbyterianism had very high standards for its ministry. As if to provoke troubles that already rested on the lap of destiny, the General Assembly in 1799 had reaffirmed the need for care in educating and the necessity for amply and regularly paying its preachers. Already in 1800 the settlers of the Cumberland Valley were praying that tribunal for pastors. After the Great Revival it was worse. Because no regularly qualified ministers were available the revival party of the Cumberland ordained young men lacking in formal education. When the conservatives objected and the higher tribunals of the church condemned them for this relaxation of the standards of the denomination, the young men, their ministerial supporters, and many communicants seceded to form the separate Cumberland Presbyterian Church. It used the Methodist itinerant system as well as a more popular standard for ministerial candidates to meet the needs of the frontier.

### III.

Fortunately, at the very time that these schisms occurred in the Presbyterian denomination, steps were already being taken which would obviate considerably the difficulties which provoked them. These steps were taken in co-operation with the Congregationalists. On the one hand they made it easier for both sects to establish churches and to supply minis-

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ters to their communicants who migrated. On the other hand, it relaxed for several decades the rather rigid Presbyterian system, by compromising it with Congregationalism. The Presbyterians gained by a greater degree of decentralization. The Congregationalists gained by co-operation in a number of ecclesiastical organizations which gave them what they needed, machinery to keep up with the constantly removing frontier. What the nature of this co-operation was we shall now see.

During the first three decades of the century, co-operation was facilitated by an exchange of "corresponding delegates" between the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church and the Congregational Associations of the New England States. These delegates were not only allowed to sit and to debate in the bodies to which they were sent, but also allowed to vote. Such friendly communication had by 1830 led to the establishment between the two denominations of several common ecclesiastical agencies for missions and education. So successful were these inter-denominational bodies that purely Presbyterian organizations had generally failed. Thus the inter-denominational American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions in 1826 absorbed the more purely Presbyterian United Foreign Mission Society, and thus the Presbyterian Education Society in 1827 became a branch of the co-operative American Education Society which claimed the support of both denominations.

So far as western expansion was concerned the most important agency which combined the efforts of both denominations was the American Home Missionary Society. In its activities it made no discrimination between the ministers, laity, and churches of either sect. However, it was an important instrument for the establishment of institutions of New England antecedents. Until after its organization in 1826 Congregationalists in Illinois were limited to a very few churches and to only occasional ministers in the region neighboring St. Louis. It was this society which sent to Illinois the "Yale Band," a group of students at New Haven who dreamed of establishing a college as well as churches in Illinois. Illinois College, at its inception a mutual achievement of Congregationalists and Presbyterians, was largely the result of the work of this "Yale Band." Knox and Galesburg have a direct interest in this group. One of them, Elisha Jenney, agent for the American Home Missionary Society, eventually made his home there and his family joined the First Church. Another, Flaval Bascom, was minister of the First Church, and for many years a trustee of Knox College. Still another, Lucien Farn-



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ham, was associated with the founders of Knox in their anti-slavery activities. Furthermore, Edward Beecher, the first president of Illinois College, was to be the first pastor of the First Congregational Church in Galesburg, and a trustee of Knox College.—The American Home Missionary Society did a great deal to stimulate educational as well as religious institutions. In Illinois before the Civil War it was interested in colleges and academies in at least twenty places and female seminaries in at least ten places in addition to those at Galesburg.

By far the most significant weakening of the denominational distinctions between the two denominations occurred in an ecclesiastical treaty made between them in 1801. This was the Plan of Union. Its object was to compromise differences in church government in order that the establishment of Christian institutions in the West might not falter because of wasteful duplication of churches and ministers or because of harmful disputations over issues of church polity. It provided that Presbyterian churches could install Congregational ministers, and *vice-versa*. Both parties to such an arrangement retained connections with their regular denominational organs. It was also possible to set up "mixed churches," in which both the Congregational and Presbyterian members retained their denominational rights and privileges. Such a church was governed in part by a standing committee. It was represented both in Congregational associations and in the Presbyterian tribunals.

The Congregationalists were eventually to complain that the Plan of Union operated in favor of Presbyterianism. They declared that young men of Congregational antecedents, after being imbued in the seminaries of the East with the notion that the lax church polity of Congregationalism was not suited to the heterogeneous western settlements, went to the frontier, connected themselves with the Presbyterian tribunals, and often out of Congregational settlers formed Presbyterian churches.

Certainly west of the Alleghenies the labels "Presbyterian" and "Congregational" were not mutually exclusive. The term Presbyterian, as popularly used, was "ambiguous and indiscriminating, being almost as often applied to churches which were really Congregational, as to those which were really Presbyterian." The confusion is illustrated by the status of the original Galesburg church by 1860; it was then called the "First Church of Christ," it was known to be "Congregational," it had delib-

<sup>1</sup>*Report on Knox College, Presented to the General Association of Illinois, May 24, 1861, p. 31.*

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erately severed all connections with the higher government of the Presbyterians, it had formally dropped the name "First Presbyterian"; yet its property was held until 1869 by a "Presbyterian Society." This church in Galesburg was one of many others founded in Illinois as Presbyterian during the thirties that by the Civil War had become Congregational.

The colony that founded Galesburg came from a region where denominational distinctions had been even more confused than they were elsewhere. For in New York a compromise supplementary to the Plan of Union had been made in 1808. Congregational associations were merged with a Presbyterian synod, though the individual churches still retained many of their Congregational features and were hardly Presbyterian even in name. George Washington Gale himself exemplified well the degree to which Presbyterianism had compromised with Congregationalism. His father was a member of a church which was called Presbyterian, but which the son admitted was "rather" Congregational. While still a young man the son was delegate to a presbytery which mostly comprised Congregational churches. After he had been licensed to preach, his first labors were as a missionary on a New York frontier among what he called members of the "Presbyterian, or rather the Congregational Church." Among the ministers participating in his ordination by a presbytery were pastors of Congregational churches which still maintained connections with Congregational associations. In 1820 he went as a delegate to the General Assembly and voted with the New School (pro-Congregational) party in that legislature against union with the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church. The New School opposed that union on the ground that the group thus admitted were too "high church in their views of doctrine and polity and if admitted would give the Old School the preponderance."<sup>1</sup> At that time Gale was minister of a Congregational church that still kept its connections with both denominations. That Gale had a real preference for the Presbyterian mode of government was revealed by the use of his influence to persuade his congregation to change its polity to the Presbyterian form; but on the other hand, he also appreciated the less exacting system of Congregationalism, for when he wanted a young man in his charge to be licensed to preach, he took him not to the presbytery but to a Congregational association, because the latter would be less restricted in its actions by the rules of a rigid constitution. At this association meeting Gale sat as a "corresponding member."

<sup>1</sup>George Washington Gale, *Autobiography*, pp. 113-114.

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### IV.

Such confusion might have cleared away had the willingness to compromise continued until the two denominations had completely coalesced. Unfortunately, the disposition to co-operate which had characterized the first three decades of the century gave way in the next thirty years to a bitter denominational conflict. The issues of church government and confederation with Congregationalism divided the Presbyterians, and a long partisan conflict culminated in a great schism which took place at the very time that Knox College and Galesburg were being founded.

The Reverend G. W. Gale used to quote an acquaintance to the effect that "Hell holds a jubilee every time the General Assembly meets." There were in the Presbyterian Church after about 1820 two great parties, the Old School and the New School. They differed slightly in the shades of their Calvinism, but the important differences were over matters of church government. The Old School objected to the Congregational elements introduced by the corresponding delegates from the New England associations, by the mutual missionary and educational agencies, and by the Plan of Union. The inter-denominational organizations were to them "voluntary societies" subject to "misrule and anarchy." Together with the Plan of Union they were likely to transform the polity of Presbyterianism to Congregationalism. In general, the Old School accused their opponents of "radicalism," a "revolutionary spirit," a disposition to "level all order to dust," and a tendency to the "anarchy of popular government by mobs" Part of such extreme statements was no doubt rhetorical hyperbole, but it was true that the New School was more liberal in admitting new members, in ordaining preachers, in tolerating the "New Measures" of evangelists such as the notorious Charles Grandison Finney. The New School did insist on maintaining close relations with Congregationalists, on preserving the Plan of Union despite its concessions to the Congregational polity, and on continuing the connection with the joint missionary and educational enterprises. As time proved, the New School were really Congregationalist to the extent that they favored a decentralized church system and greater local governmental powers.

In 1837 the Old School majority in the General Assembly set out to purge the denomination. In that region whence the Galesburg colony came the confusion of the two sects was so great that it was found expedient simply to prune away the presbyteries and synods of central and western New York. It was the exclusion of these bodies by the Old

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School that led to the more general scission of 1838.

### V.

After this schism the New School decentralized its polity considerably. The judicial powers of the General Assembly were taken away, and it became hardly more than an advisory body, which met not annually as before, but only once in three years. By 1842 it was possible for writer of the reconstituted denomination to state: "The modifications of our constitution adopted at the last Assembly have taken from Presbyterianism some of the prominent objections which were urged against it, and will enable the Presbyterians and Congregationalists to act more efficiently together than they ever could before."<sup>1</sup>

In order to realize the closest possible connections with Congregationalists, the New School Synod of Illinois was by that time (1842) urging a special plan of union with the Congregational association of Illinois. Furthermore, the New School Peoria Synod, set off in 1843 from the Illinois Synod to comprise the churches of the northern part of the state, including Galesburg, continued the cordial affiliations with Congregationalists. Dual membership of ministers in both presbyteries and associations was specifically approved; a proposed religious paper for the West was to assume "grounds common to orthodox Congregationalists and Presbyterians"; and in 1848 it was resolved to unite in friendly correspondence with the Congregationalists and to send three delegates to their General Association of Illinois, G. W. Gale being appointed to the first delegation. How far the tendency toward union developed before it began to fail is indicated by the following resolution, which was adopted in 1846 by the Presbytery of Knox, to which the Galesburg church belonged:

The Presbytery of Knox, having had under consideration the importance of a greater measure of union between Presbyterian and Congregational churches, feel called upon to express their conviction that the cause of religion would be greatly promoted by a greater degree of unity among these denominations. While we are not prepared to say that the time has come in which a formal union may be effected, yet we hope that, by frequent interchange of labors, by more frequent attendance upon each other's ecclesiastical meetings, and by co-operation in all good and holy efforts to promote the cause of religion, a greater measure of real union and of

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<sup>1</sup>*New York Evangelist*, I, No. 18 (May 5, 1842).

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brotherly love may be attained; and the time may be hastened when a union in form as well as in substance may be consummated.<sup>1</sup>

Such was the situation, so far as Congregationalists and Presbyterians were concerned, when Galesburg and Knox College were being founded. The Presbyterians who participated in that founding were New School Presbyterians. The fact must be emphasized. They belonged to the party that were compromised by and confederated with Congregationalism. They came from the region in the East where the confusion of sects was most confounded. That is why the question whether Congregationalists or Presbyterians founded the First Church, the college, and the town, cannot be answered in anything less than a lecture forty-five minutes long.

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# The Coming of the Galesburg Colony

## LECTURE III

THERE are two groups of pioneers that deserve special sympathy: those who failed in lost causes (Galesburg was not one of these); and the many women, who often had the most to risk, and who often came along only in obedience to insistent husbands in whose visionary confidence they did not share. There is real poignancy in a reference to the first wife of George Washington Gale, found in a short biography of her husband:

She was delicately reared, and a young girl at the time of her marriage. The income from her small fortune enabled him [G. W. Gale] to prosecute his plans for doing good, and she cheerfully followed his fortunes, if not with enthusiasm, at least without complaint.<sup>1</sup>

Ordinarily, however, too much sentiment is spent on pioneers. The typical pioneer was not a pioneer for the sake of being a pioneer. The great mass of the western settlers were persons seeking a solution for problems existing for themselves in their own time. They were only incidentally pioneers. That is, their solution for their problems caused them to open new country and erect new homes. The consequence was that they were pathfinders not only for themselves but also for us, who live where they first entered and dwell where they first built. They were not adventurers. Much of what is called adventure might be defined as hardship and insecurity viewed in retrospect. The typical pioneer was no more eager for adventure than we are. If the Galesburg settler invited hardship and insecurity, he probably did it only with confidence that it would soon be overcome and eventually reap a return, material or spiritual. Those who succeeded received anticipated recompense for expected

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<sup>1</sup>"George Washington Gale," *Encyclopedia of Illinois and Knox County* (1899).

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difficulties, just as you and I do. Why should one become sentimental over them?

The circumstances and motives that led to the founding of Galesburg influenced many other settlements. We will not go wrong in our study of the local settlers if we survey certain causes which in general aggravated the westward movement, and look for them in the establishment of our community. Those causes may, for our purposes, be conveniently grouped as: personal, economic, religious, patriotic, and educational.

### I.

The West was a welcome way out for the person who found remaining at home painful. Perhaps he had been jilted in love, perhaps he was a fugitive from justice, or perhaps he was a bankrupt. There were many who for such intensely personal reasons gladly sought out the frontier region, where a man on his own could most easily make a new beginning. The reason was not by any means always a dishonorable one. Sometimes it was merely that the old home was associated with high hopes disappeared in bitter disillusionment. For example, there was that young man, Harvey Henry May, of Washington County, New York, who was convinced in the twenties that he had invented a practical mechanical reaper. For some reason, perhaps lack of money, he failed to patent it. Then in 1834 he read of the patenting of McCormick's machine. The disappointment was bitter. He sold out his mercantile establishment, and in March, 1836, started west to find a new home, which he did among strangers in Galesburg in 1837. Here, to continue his story, he constructed what was, in that region at least, the first successful steel plow, an improvement which saved the prairie plowman from stopping every dozen rods or so to scrape off the soil that packed so quickly on the mold-board as to make plowing very hard and very slow work.

May, however, was an exception. The Galesburg settlers were not generally emigrants because of disappointments or failures. They were on the whole substantial and steady-going, coming to the West for positive rather than negative reasons, actuated by motives other than the necessity for a new start in life.

### II.

The cheap price of Illinois prairie land was no doubt part of the attraction of the West for the Galesburg pioneers. Certain members of the committee which came west to select and buy land for the colony



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also came prepared to buy land on their own account. One of them, Sylvanus Ferris, wished to secure to each of his six sons and his daughter an entire section of land. Erastus Swift and Henry Wilcox of Vermont had determined to buy land even before they joined the colony. It should be pointed out that special economic problems existed for the farmers of New York and New England in the eighteen thirties. Many of those who had been growing grain were suffering from a growing competition from western farmers. The Erie Canal, opened in 1825, was bringing grain to the eastern sea-board by the hundreds of thousands of bushels; and in New York the loss from poorer prices for grain was aggravated by the taxes to pay for and maintain the canal. Except in the more fertile valleys it appeared best either to use the land for grazing and dairying or to seek the more productive land in the West. Many did this. It was true that the Erie Canal ran through Oneida County, the neighborhood where the colony was organized, and that those adjacent to the canal were somewhat better off; but, even in that county, the competition must have been felt to some degree, and even where it was not, there would be interest in that extensive western migration which the agricultural depression of the region stimulated during the eighteen-thirties.

It is no disparagement of pioneering to call attention to the economic factors that entered into it. In fact, there is a school of American History that regards the presence of free or very cheap land as the most important influence in the development of our free and democratic institutions. Unfortunately, much of the land business was not for the purpose of actual use, but for sheer speculation, often accompanied by misrepresentation or fraud. The notorious Toliver Craig put forty bogus deeds on record in one day at Knoxville. Not exactly fraud, but certainly sharp practice, was the act of another land speculator, Richard Bassett, who, having learned of the projected Galesburg settlement, entered one-half of each quarter-section of land in the tier of townships directly south of the colony purchase. Undoubtedly, he anticipated profit by the colony development. Apparently, he calculated that if it expanded, it would not want the alternate eighty-acre pieces that he had not entered because they were separated, and he would therefore be able to secure those for himself also.

Quite often the project of an educational institution, academy, or college was one of the means used by speculators to stimulate sales of

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lands in which they were interested. The sincerity of many such enterprises was questionable, and an astounding number of educational institutions were projected, and many were chartered which never materialized.

In the case of the Galesburg colony, however, educational institutions were the real and primary objective of the enterprise. Cheap land was to be the means by which the vision of a college, a female seminary, an academy and a theological school was to be realized. How "speculation" in its best sense was to facilitate the project was explained in the "Circular and Plan" which Gale published in 1834. The essential features of the scheme were:

1. Forty thousand dollars were to be secured from subscribers, who were to elect a board of trustees with a committee to purchase western lands.

2. A township was to be secured at the government price of \$1.25. Three contiguous sections were to be set apart for the purposes of the college and the village. Much of it was to be sold back to the subscribers at an average of \$5.00, thus making a profit of \$3.75 for the colony and its institutions. Proceeds from the remaining lands (not set apart, and not sold to subscribers as farms or village lots) were to be used to build up endowment funds for educational buildings, scholarships, teachers' salaries, etc.

3. Every subscriber who purchased at least eighty acres of land or who took village plots in payment of his subscription, was to receive title to free instruction of one youth in the college, preparatory school, or female seminary for twenty-five years, which title could be sold, used, or rented at his pleasure.

In the sense that it planned to finance the institutions by an anticipated rise in the price of lands, in fact planned to sell much of it at once at four times its purchase price, this was a speculative scheme, but of the most laudable kind. For it expected to use the "unearned increment" not selfishly, but for the further improvement of the rather raw civilization that had appeared in the Mississippi Valley.

The principles of Gale's plan were fulfilled, though considerably modified in the details of their application. Only about twenty-one thousand dollars in subscriptions was actually secured and not all of it advanced. A loan of \$10,000 had to be negotiated, largely on the security of Sylvanus Ferris, who had accumulated wealth from the growing dairy industry in New York. It was not possible to buy a whole

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township; only twenty, not thirty-six, sections of land were purchased. Furthermore, the land did not rise in value as expected, for the panic of 1837 intervened, and not nearly so much money as had been expected was available to start and sustain the college.

### III.

In addition to the personal reasons and economic factors that caused many people to migrate westward, there was another less common motive that actuated a small but significant number of settlers. This was the religious motive. It was not strong among the great mass of the pioneers, but among those who were moved by it, it was often very vigorous. Such persons were sincerely concerned over the religious neglect of the western settlements. The absence of churches and lack of ministers was to them seriously alarming. It was feared that the region was approaching a state but little better than heathenism. Nor was this merely a matter of interest in the prosperity of ecclesiastical institutions or even of concern over the eternal life of the neglected pioneers. Much of it was combined (as DeTocqueville, the most astute observer of this period, observed) with a patriotic desire that the future of the nation be secured by having the institutions that developed in the West Christian and also free. In 1830, an alarmist declared, "The truth is that Satan, plotting the destruction of our nation, and the overthrow of Christianity, has fixed his eyes on our new settlements, and has erected and fortified his strongholds, and if they are not wrested from him, his object will be inevitably attained."

Two religious developments in the West were particularly feared: "the progress of Romanism," and "open and undisguised infidelity." These, it was feared, might "swallow up" our social and religious institutions and all the blessing of a free government. In the third and fourth decades of the nineteenth century many of the missionary and educational enterprises organized in the East had as a motive this fear over the future of the West. One of them was George W. Gale's plan for a Manual Labor College. The plan which he advertised clearly evinced its chief concern over the situation in the new settlements:

Who that loves the institutions of his country can look upon it without alarm when he reflects that that in a few, a *very* few years, they will be in the hands of a population reared in this field . . . under the forming hand of those who are no less enemies of civil liberty than of a pure gospel.

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The phase of this alarm which seems most strange today is the terror of Roman Catholicism. But it was, none-the-less, a real terror then, becoming more and more manifest during the eighteen-thirties. It was due primarily to an appearance of striking growth of the Catholic Church, suggested between 1825 and 1840 by the organization of six more sees in the West, four new women's orders, and seven new Catholic publications. The threat seemed awful to zealous Protestants, and during the thirties there were strong manifestations of alarm. Mobs burned a Catholic church in New York in 1831, a convent in Boston in 1834, and another church in Burlington, Vermont, in 1838. Less horrible expressions of terror came from more respectable sources. In the year that the subscribers to the Galesburg colony organized (1835) Lyman Beecher published his *Plea for the West*, and the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church resolved that the Roman Catholic Church "cannot be recognized as Christian" and that all proper means should be used in pulpit and press "to resist the extension of Romanism." On Independence Day of that same year the *Catholic Miscellany* described the heated propaganda concerning the Western situation:

How common has been the expedient, employed by missionaries from the West, in the eastern states, of raising money for education or for religion, upon the allegation that it was necessary to prevent the ascendancy of the Catholics? How often has it been asserted, throughout the last ten years, that this was the chosen field on which the papists had erected their standard, and where the battle must be fought for civil and religious liberty? What tales of horror have been poured into the ears of the confiding children of the pilgrims, of young men emigrating to the West, marrying Catholic ladies, and collapsing without a struggle into the arms of Romanism; of splendid edifices undermined by profound dungeons, prepared for the reception of heretic Republicans; of boxes of firearms secretly transported into hidden receptacles, in the very bosom of our flourishing cities; of vast and widely ramified European conspiracies by which Irish Catholics are suddenly converted into lovers of monarchy and obedient instruments of King!

To a nation thus excited Gale's "Circular," advertising his project for a western school, added its warning of "those who are no less enemies of civil liberty than of a pure gospel."

#### IV.

The manual labor school was not original with Gale, but he does seem to have developed the idea independently on his small farm at West-

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ern, Oneida County, New York. Furthermore, the Oneida Manual Labor Institute which he established at Whitesboro, New York, appears from the educational periodicals and proceedings of benevolent organizations to have been the most widely known of the schools operated under this plan. More fully the plan was that young men should work out all or part of their school expenses on a school farm or in workshops. Not only would this aid young men to whom a formal education would otherwise be too costly, but for all students it would be helpful in preserving health, likely to be impaired by exclusive attention to studies. It would also promote the development of character. For quite a number of years the Oneida Institute seems to have prospered. But after seven years at the head of it, Gale, in 1834, resigned. The reasons are not clearly apparent, but it is certain that he had by this time a dream of a more pretentious school on the same plan, which should be established in the West.

### V.

The consummation of Gale's plan needed a proper form of organization. It was already at hand in the traditions of the Yankees, so numerous in the part of New York where he lived. It was the colony, an instrument for migration which was particularly characteristic of the expansion of New England as contrasted with that of the other sections of the sea-board.

In seventeenth century Massachusetts a new settlement was initiated by a group of citizens who were interested in establishing a new town and for that purpose secured a grant of land from the General Court. Originally it was carefully ascertained that those asking for the grants were not speculators. The grantees then became proprietors of the site, laid it out, and divided much of it among themselves for their own uses. The families associated with the group then migrated to the site, and an entire community was at once established. Newcomers could buy land from this new colony, but did not necessarily share in its control.

In the transference of culture and institutions such colony migration had distinct advantages. The new settlement was homogeneous, being composed of persons with like ideals and common objectives; it was organized even before migration occurred; and the preachers and teachers who were brought along carried on religious and educational activities without interruption. Continuity with the older traditions was thus maintained. Furthermore, for quite a period the original colony could control the settlement to its own ends, for strangers could be refused full

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membership unless they conformed to religious and moral standards. Thus the colony "stamped" the town.

It is true that during the eighteenth century this colony migration method deteriorated. It became less the general rule for Yankees, and it was often also abused for speculative ends. But many New England colonies were still formed, and still migrated (to New York and to the Western Reserve in particular). Even in the nineteenth century such colonies, directly or indirectly from New England, contributed greatly to the westward movement. Quite a number were established in Illinois, especially during the decade that Galesburg was settled.

None of these other Yankee colonies in Illinois was more successful in fulfilling the objectives of its original proprietors than was Galesburg. It is true that the original settlers could not control the morals of newcomers as did the original New England town proprietors, but that the Galesburg founders tried to do so was shown in the clause of the original land titles which provided that no liquor was to be sold on the property acquired from the colony. The sale of liquor, and the vending of recreations such as "pool" and bowling remained illegal during the first generation. Furthermore, a flourishing church and a group of educational institutions were quickly and successfully established. How the colony method of migration facilitated getting a new community under way is revealed in the diary of Mrs. Eli Farnham, one of the first settlers. By their second New Year's Day together out on the prairies there had already been organized among the settlers an anti-slavery prayer-meeting; an anti-slavery society; a singing school; "two female prayer-meetings, one the married and one the unmarried ladies;" a maternal association; a sewing society; and a "Moral Reform Society." Thus were re-established on the new lands and in an unstable environment, the old securities against the world, the flesh and the devil. An indelible mark of consecration to stern purposes set the village apart from its neighbors. A score of years later one still walked under the rays of a "sun of reform" which an itinerant lecturer found notably warm after cold receptions in the neighboring towns.

### VI

The interesting story of the actual travels of the Galesburg colony has been often told. I shall repeat only so much of it here as illustrates the planning and organization that characterized the migration.

By the early part of 1835 the Rev. Gale had secured enough subscrib-

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ers to his idea to warrant organization, and this step was taken on May 6, 1835. A Prudential Committee to manage the enterprise was appointed, and it in turn designated a committee to explore and select land in Illinois or Indiana. The exploring committee went west, found that in Illinois there was a land boom, and that no entire township was available. It reported back to the subscribers in August, 1835, that if anything was to be done it must be done by a committee with plenary powers to act and with money to pay. The report was accepted, a thousand dollars collected, ten thousand dollars borrowed, and another committee sent out empowered to take immediate action. This group was led to Knoxville in Knox county, Illinois, by a member of the first committee who had himself purchased land in the vicinity. The committee approved of the land they saw and hurried on to the Quincy land office to enter all the land still available in the northern two-thirds of the township.

The report by the purchasing committee of what it had done was accepted by the subscribers on January 7, 1836. That same day were taken the first steps towards the creation of the new institutions which the new lands were to support. Trustees were elected for the college. A committee was appointed to determine what should be done to guard its morals and also to select names for it and the village. Sale and distribution of the lands began at once.

Two men, Henry Ferris and Abel Goodell, who were already in the West when the colony site was selected came there and spent the winter of 1835-36. The movement of the colony proper, however, did not begin until the spring of 1836. The first families came overland by wagon, and arrived in June, to be followed shortly by others. Several families that summer made the trip in boats to near the head of Lake Erie and then by the recently completed Ohio Canal to Portsmouth on the Ohio River and thus, by way of the Mississippi and Illinois Rivers, to central Illinois. In some cases the heads of families came first, looked over the site, and later went back to bring wives and children. Many not originally in the colony were attracted to the enterprise by their friends and neighbors. Some were persons, such as Matthew Chambers already looking for lands, who heard of the new settlement and cast their lot with it. Practically all of the first settlers came from New York and the New England states.

By December of 1836 about forty families were on the ground, and

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it was practicable to make a beginning with the educational institutions for which the colony had been organized. On the sixteenth of that month the proprietors of the college lands met and elected a new board of trustees. A committee was then appointed to ask the state legislature for a charter. It was granted on February 15, 1837.

### VII.

On the day the legislature at Vandalia voted the college charter, the first recorded meeting for the organization of a church was held by the settlers in Galesburg. The only real problem involved in this matter was that of the form of church government.

Most of the projectors of Galesburg and Knox College no doubt called themselves Presbyterians, but they were *New School* Presbyterians, which, as we have seen in the second lecture of this series, meant that they were Presbyterians in a highly modified sense. Moreover, there was from the outset an element in the settlement that was definitely recognized as Congregational, and this element became proportionally larger among the purchasers of land, the patrons of the college, and the members of the first church. It is also important to notice that exclusive sectarian purpose was conspicuously absent in the declared objectives of the college enterprise. Knox College, Illinois College at Jacksonville, and Beloit College "were undoubtedly established as Union Institutions, not by compact, but by mutual understanding. As New School Presbyterians and Congregationalists were co-operating in Missions, Home and Foreign, and in Educational Societies, it was supposed that they might also co-operate in founding and conducting Literary Institutions."<sup>1</sup> The founders of Illinois College, no more than those of Knox, foresaw that denominational dissension would trouble those institutions and the churches associated with them.

Nevertheless, it is beyond question that the first church was originally in its organization and ecclesiastical connection completely Presbyterian. Organization of a Presbyterian church had been anticipated by the presbytery as early as September, 1836, and the first of a series of

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<sup>1</sup>A communication from the Rev. H. Curtiss, president of the college, to the *New York Evangelist*, January 3, 1860 (*Report on Knox College*, p. 28.). See the same opinion expressed by the Rev. Curtiss in his *Inaugural Address*, June 24, 1858 (Chicago, 1858) p. 10. His opinion is particularly valuable on this point because at the time these statements were made he was regarded as of the Presbyterian party in Galesburg.



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local meetings for that purpose was held on February 15, 1837. At a meeting held to consider what should be the denominational connection of the church, the issue was very freely debated. Mr. Samuel Tompkins, who sympathized with pure Congregationalism, moved that the polity be determined by vote of a majority of all members. Gale objected, saying that he himself cared little for the General Assembly or anything of the Presbyterian system above the presbytery, but that the colony had better agree to the name Presbyterian because it was in "better odor" in the East and would help in bringing aid to the college. The Congregationalists were persuaded, and took the friendly attitude that because the Presbyterians had taken the lead in the establishment of the colony their preferences should be heeded. Sectarian predilections were sacrificed to maintain unity. Finally, on April 5, 1837, it was unanimously resolved that it was "expedient" to organize "fully" as Presbyterian. Four days later the name, "Presbyterian Church of Galesburg," was adopted.

The church was organized under the authority of the Schuyler Presbytery, which extended over the Military Tract. Very shortly, however, the local effects of the denominational schism of 1838 altered that jurisdiction. The majority of the members of the Schuyler Presbytery were of the Old School, the party not congenial to the Galesburg members. In a called meeting at Rushville in August, 1838, the presbytery divided into its Old School and New School components. In September of the same year, after the Synod of Illinois had similarly divided, the New School Synod of Illinois erected a new presbytery, by name of Knox, to contain much of the territory comprised by the Old School Schuyler Presbytery. Gale and a fellow villager were in attendance at the synod when this was done. Another Galesburg settler, the Rev. John Waters, was appointed temporary moderator of the new presbytery, and pursuant to the order of the synod, on November 7, 1838, at a meeting in Galesburg, the new Knox Presbytery was constituted.

The Knox Presbytery became a member of the Peoria Synod when in 1843 that tribunal was set up to comprise the New School churches in the northern part of the state. Important men in the history of Knox College were prominent leaders in this synod; four of its moderators between 1843 and the Civil War were: Hiram H. Kellogg and Harvey Curtis, presidents of the college; George W. Gale; and Flavel Bascom, for many years a trustee of the college, and for six years pastor of the Galesburg First Presbyterian Church. The synod in 1850 united the Knox

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Presbytery with the Peoria Presbytery and gave the new body the name of Peoria and Knox Presbytery, but in 1857 the synod modified the boundaries somewhat and the name Knox Presbytery was restored.

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# Early Years in the Galesburg Colony

## LECTURE IV

TONIGHT, the chief problem of the lecture will be the denominational quarrel that occurred in the colony church. Most of the discussion will deal with the developments that by the Civil War had caused four Presbyterian and Congregational churches to exist in Galesburg. Before undertaking to trace those rather intricate church relationships, it will be necessary to say something about the early preachers, the first church building, and the place of the church in the lives of its members as well as in the affairs of the community.

### I.

Each of the first ministers of the colony church was connected with Galesburg in some way that probably would have caused him to be there regardless of his pastoral duties. During the first seven years the only exception to that rule was the evangelist, Horatio Foote, who came here in 1839 and stayed for a year. The other ministers during that time were part of the colony. One of them, George Washington Gale, was the originator of the colony. Another, "Father" Waters, had served as chairman of the first meeting in New York at which the subscribers to that idea were organized. Still another was Hiram Huntington Kellogg. He and Gale and "Father" Waters had given an impetus to other subscriptions by themselves first subscribing a thousand dollars each. In addition to that connection with the colony Kellogg came to be president of the college. Hiram Marsh, who was minister for a short time during the first seven years, taught in the academy.

It was not until 1844 that an outsider became pastor. He was the Rev. Edward Hollister, a Congregationalist. The date of his pastorate is significant, for as we shall see, it was about that time that dissatisfaction with the purely Presbyterian polity of the church became manifest.

The first church meetings were held in the log cabin of one of the

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settlers, Hugh Conger. Beginning in the winter of 1836-37 a larger building comprising two rooms was available for use both as school and meeting house. The walls were of split timbers, the floor of split boards, and the structure was ceiled with rough bass-wood boards. By the autumn of 1837 so many of the colonists had moved from the temporary settlement at Log City to their farms or to the new village of Galesburg that services were held alternately in the older place and in a store building at the newer place. Finally, late in the fall of 1838, the first Knox Academy building was finished, and for several years it was used for religious meetings.

During the early forties it became apparent that the Academy was too small for the regular Sunday audiences, and it was decided to erect a church building. Progress on this undertaking went slowly indeed. Getting the materials for the really large edifice that was planned was in itself a task on the frontier; the groves were scoured for trees that furnished beams large enough to span a great room, and the county was searched for stone that might be quarried for the foundation. Finally, the stone and the timbers were hauled in, but for about two years they lay on the church lot before anything more was done.

The frame was not raised until the spring of 1845, and further construction was so delayed that the building was finished just in time for the first Knox College Commencement in June, 1846, at which occasion temporary seats, platform and pulpit were used. Further finishing and furnishing of the church postponed the formal dedication to June, 1848. The cause for such dilatory construction was in part the lack of money, in part difficulty in securing building materials such as glass, but also in part lack of co-operation between the two parties in the congregation, whose differences will presently be described.

This church building was for many years a center of community life as well as a house of worship for its builders. Here were heard many Lyceum lecturers brought by the literary societies of the college, as well as the deliberations of town meetings, or the plottings of party caucuses, or the resolutions of anti-slavery meetings, or the scheming of those who were intent on bringing a railroad into the city.

There is no extant evidence in the records of the first six or seven years of the bitter sectarian conflict that was eventually to result in a division of the original church, cause the mother church to cut off its Presbyterian connections, involve the town in a partisan controversy, and fill

## EARLY YEARS IN THE GALESBURG COLONY

the newspapers with so much polemics that the editor had to announce a limit on what he would publish. No one would have predicted the angry strife that was one day to subject the aged Gale to painful accusations by his scholars of high crimes and misdemeanors, provoke an acrimonious conflict for control of the college that threatened to wreck it out of sheer spite, furnish the seniors reason for absenting themselves from their own Commencement, excite many undergraduates into withdrawing from the school, and send one of the Beechers arguing the scandal of it throughout the state. For the first few years the congregation seems to have pursued a quiet course, not unlike that of many another church, except perhaps that it performed more zealously its duty of supervising the lives of its members. In those days the weapons of ecclesiastical censure, or worse, of excommunication, were not to be ignored. In a community where life was still confined and self-contained, evasion from the opinions articulated by one of its chief organs was difficult. The church offered the chief diversion from an existence that lacked the purchasable recreations of today, and loss of church fellowship meant disturbance of the normal life here as well as uncertainty over the terrors hereafter. Active, well conducted congregations like the one in Galesburg performed many of the disciplinary functions we now expect from the inferior civil courts. They punished the intemperate, enforced the Sabbath, and admonished the violent; they arbitrated suits concerning property as well as slander, and looked into family troubles such as wife beating, adultery, and bigamy.

### II.

What provoked the dispute that led to the reorganization of the church in 1845 is only partly apparent. The ratio of Presbyterians to Congregationalists, the former slightly preponderant, remained about the same. During the winter of 1843 and 1844 the Rev. Hollister, a Congregationalist from a neighboring town, was "employed" for the pulpit, but it was not at all unusual for a New School Presbyterian church to have a preacher from the other denomination. In fact, early in the next summer, another clergyman of the same sect, the Rev. Lucius H. Parker, arrived from the East and was given the pastorate until late in the fall of 1845. It was during his term that the soreness concerning the two forms of church government came to a head, Parker identifying himself with the Congregationalists and Gale with the Presbyterians. The former faction showed a lack of enthusiasm for the completion of a new

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church building then under construction, feeling no doubt that, in view of their large membership in the congregation, there should be some modification of its polity in their favor. Possibly Parker and several others induced the Congregationalists to hold back their subscriptions and assessments unless concessions were made to them. In any event, difficulty in finishing the meeting house was the reason for the compromise on the organization of the church.

An informal meeting on June 18, 1845, to discuss the subject of church government, appointed a committee to present a report for a change in the polity of the church. At a meeting of the church called a week later for the purpose of "uniting on a plan of union," this report was presented and discussed. Ten days later it was unanimously adopted. The scheme was essentially that suggested for "mixed" churches by the greater Plan of Union effected between the General Assembly and Congregationalist associations in 1801. After the manner of the Congregationalists the share of the members in the direct control of the church was greatly increased. All the members could now vote when new persons applied for admission, and in the future the ruling elders were not to hold office permanently, but only for three years, one third of them being subject to a new election annually? In the event of one of the rather frequent church trials, a Congregationalist could after the fashion of his sect be tried by the whole church, but a Presbyterian could with the proper procedure of his denomination choose to be tried by the "session," with the privilege of appeal to the presbytery. The church was to be represented both in the presbytery and the Congregational association of the region. It was, all in all, a sensible arrangement, for it permitted to the Congregationalists all the liberties they could reasonably ask, "yet left the rights and privileges of the others unimpaired." It was the scheme which New School Presbyterians and Congregationalists of the settlement had known well in their New York homes. Praiseworthy moderation had characterized the discussions leading up to its adoption, and it had the expressed approbation of the Reverend Gale himself. The plan was put into immediate operation, both internally as regards dual government by the church and "session," and externally as regards connections with Presbyterian and Congregational bodies.

### III.

Clearly there was little, if any, desire in 1845 by the leaders of the college and church to repudiate the Congregationalist element. The circum-

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stances under which the Rev. Jonathan Blanchard became president about that time are evidence of that fact. Both President Kellogg and Professor Gale, in urging him to accept the office, cited the Rev. Blanchard's influence with the Congregationalists as something which the college needed. It was considered a matter of "no small moment" by Professor Gale that Blanchard could "unite the Presbyterians and Congregationalists in this part of the state." Furthermore, his influence among Congregationalists in the East would be useful, for their support of the college was needed, and the growing self-consciousness of the sect caused them to balk at donating to projects that did not sustain the Congregational form of government. Soon after the Rev. Blanchard assumed his duties for Knox, Gale wrote to him that it would be very unfortunate if sectarian interests came to the fore: "There would be great rejoicing in the gates of Rome and of Pandemonium, to see ministers and churches, especially those of the New School Presbyterian and Congregationalists, assume that attitude; because they have most to fear from the energetic co-operation of those two bodies . . . My Presbyterianism has never hindered me from co-operating kindly, and in good faith, with my Congregational brethren, in building up the cause of Christ, East or West, nor do I intend it shall."

Did such a firm resolution arise from utter faith in future peace between the denominations, or was it provoked by a hardly conscious anxiety over the known Congregationalist predilections of his correspondent? Before his election as president, Blanchard, who was a Presbyterian preacher of a Presbyterian Church in Cincinnati, stated that on coming to Galesburg he would prefer to connect himself with an association of Congregationalists. He had even earlier indicated to Kellogg that his anti-slavery opinions caused him to sympathize more with the Congregationalists than with the Presbyterians, who, he felt, were less clear-cut on the slavery question. In a great public debate on slavery held in Cincinnati, when he knew he was soon to come to Knox, he expressed his ire over the fact that in the New School General Assembly the sacrament of the Lord's Supper had been administered by a minister who had very recently, as Blanchard believed, sold a batch of slaves. In contrast, he uttered his sympathy with the Congregational Associations of New England, which had generally solemnly protested against slavery.

The Presbyterians connected with Knox may have believed that this preference for another polity was merely personal, not positive enough

to cause trouble. If that was their feeling they had no notion of the man with whom they were to deal. There was a good deal of the zealot about him. He could, for example, affirm with obvious sincerity that an annual horse show "must prove to Galesburg as the bear garden to Paris, the cock-pit to New Orleans, or the gladiatorial shows to ancient Rome." A conviction with him was almost certain to seek expression in a crusade, whether it was against Sabbath-breakers, secret societies, or slavery; and one of these convictions came to be Congregationalism. The fact that it seemed to him particularly incompatible with the institution of slavery was only one manifestation of its virtues as a form of government. Surely he must have found little to improve on the anti-slavery attitude of the local church associated with the college. The attractions of the Congregational polity to him were wider than the incidents of the single issue of slavery. It was his belief that man in general was nearing the time when he could more and more dispense with government,—a necessary evil, which in his imperfection he had to endure:

Human pride by its hatred of law, is hastening the reign of Christ . . . It has darkly wandered for six thousand years, gathering up maxims and rules of duty by the cold star-light of Nature reflected from the distant averted face of God; crushing down anarchy with the ice-bags of human governments, and securing order by the frost-work of law. But the winter solstice is past, and we are now on the return. Henceforward government must wax weaker and weaker, and truth stronger and stronger.<sup>1</sup>

Such a notion of government mixed with the scheme of Presbyterianism as fire with gunpowder. He once specifically rebuked the sequence of appellate courts superimposed on the local Presbyterian congregations because the defendant was subject to a "distant movable court" where he was "not tried by his peers." He asserted that—

No sane man, who should have been robbed of his horse, would seek to regain it by prosecuting in such a system of courts; so unequal . . . Yet every Presbyterian brother . . . is content to leave his own and the religious standing of his wife and children where he would consider his horse lost . . . The very best that can be hoped of such a system is, that the worldly nature in itself, and the worldly wisdom in its ministers, will prevent the exercise in this free country and amid free churches of the horrible powers it contains.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>J. Blanchard, "A Perfect State of Society," *The Knoxeana*, IV, No. 5, (Mar. 1855).

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About three years after he came to Knox he stated bluntly to the Board of Trustees that the religious tendencies of the country were "towards popery and High Churchism on the one hand, and towards Christian Democracy or Congregationalism on the other." "High Churchmen" he had already defined as those with whom "the gospel is grown weak, and who are evermore bringing in church power . . . to eke out the power of truth." To the support of these potentially troublesome ideas he brought with him to Galesburg the equipment of a good intellect, the aid of unusual forensic powers, the strategic strength of a national reputation, and the tactical advantages of an overbearing disposition.

There is no doubt that Blanchard actively espoused the cause of Congregationalism in Galesburg soon after he settled there and before long he came to regard with great importance his relation in that place to what he called the "expiring struggle of the principles of ecclesiastical power for the mastery over individual liberty in our churches." In 1848 he bluntly wrote to Gale that New School Presbyterians were everywhere becoming Congregationalists, and that Gale was committing himself to a "declining cause" by standing with Presbyterians "abroad" as well as "in this locality." He asked Gale to support several pro-Congregational activities; one was to incite the members of the local church who were Congregationalists not to unite in the calling or supporting of a minister, unless the Presbyterian members would consent to the installation of a Congregationalist; another was to compel a Galesburg Presbyterian minister who was publishing a paper to leave his presbytery and join an association under threat of losing Congregationalist support. The conflict between the two men was re-enforced by differences of a personal character, such as the alleged accusations by Blanchard that Gale misappropriated certain funds. The quarrel by 1849 was so agitating the community that the two local newspapers were taking opposite sides, one favoring Congregationalism, the other supporting Presbyterianism and exhibiting considerable pugnacity against President Blanchard.

In the spring of that year Gale headed a party in the Board of Trustees of Knox College which Blanchard believed was intending to oust him from the presidency. The cause for this conflict in the college administration, which lasted until the spring of 1850 and then was suspended rather than quieted, was basically Gale's allegation that Blanchard was "promoting Congregationalism to the detriment of Presbyterian-

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ism," but it was also to some degree provoked by the president's active part in the anti-slavery politics of the state. Furthermore, during these years from 1848 to 1851 Blanchard was engaged in a number of anti-slavery activities in the religious field which were straining the relations of Congregationalists and many New School Presbyterians throughout the state. The connection between this rift in the college and the troubles that were developing in the church was very close, for of the ten trustees (including Gale and his son, William Seldon) who formed the Gale party, seven were members of the church, and all of them were among the group that eventually followed Gale out of that church. How far slavery as well as purely denominational differences actuated the aggressors in this college matter it is impossible to determine. The two issues were becoming entangled.

However much Gale may once have embraced the very liberal opinions of polity which originally set the New School apart from Presbyterianism in general, by 1850 he had considerably moderated his attitude. Upon returning from a session of the Synod of Illinois which he had visited that year, he stated in a local paper that the day was passing when indifference to the question of ecclesiastical organization could prevail among Presbyterians. "The bad consequences resulting from laxness on this subject," he stated, "are beginning, as might be expected, to show themselves." He declared that New School Presbyterianism could best perform its mission by maintaining "the integrity of her own distinctive organization, turning neither to the right hand nor to the left." Gale was not alone in this growing self-consciousness of what were conceived to be the peculiar advantages of his denomination's own polity. As the forties passed into the fifties the journal of the Peoria Synod reveals a growing concern over the government of the sect. The session of 1849 witnessed the appointment of a committee to confer with the Congregationalist General Association of Illinois upon the subject of church polity and to "agree upon such a platform as shall prevent collision and misunderstanding between our respective bodies." Two years later the synod commended a warm attachment to the "admirable and efficient Polity of the Presbyterian Church," and recommended the domestic missionary society which was supported in common with Congregationalists "to receive our entire confidence . . . as long as they have no desire to interfere with the ecclesiastical relations of the churches." In 1853 a committee reversed an older opinion of the synod by expressing disapproval of

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dual denominational relations by preachers, on the grounds that it was never contemplated by the Plan of Union, and would weaken disciplinary action and denominational loyalty. The chairman of the committee which made this reactionary decision was the minister who five years later was to supplant Blanchard as president of Knox College—after a bitter denominational quarrel which was won by the Presbyterians.

Meanwhile, the tide of Congregationalism was rising fast in the local church. In the year 1849 the Congregationalists for the first time outnumbered the other faction in the roster of members. The "Presbyterian Pulsation was very feeble . . . in consequence of *tight bandaging*," and the clerk of the church session called the attention of the presbytery to the fact "that the church is Rampant Congregational," and "they claim the privilege of dotting their own i's and crossing their own t's and will submit to no Presbyterian dictation in the matter." In May of this year a periodical in Philadelphia contained a statement that "it is notorious that first and foremost in the assault upon Presbyterianism at the West marches President Blanchard." He was accused of having done all he could to change the organization of the Presbyterian Church in Galesburg, and failing in that, being intent on the destruction of the Knox Presbytery. In the way of answer to this public charge, the session of the church took the part of Blanchard to the extent of adopting a minute which affirmed that he had, "so far as our knowledge extends," never expressed a desire to any officer of the church to change the organization of the church. Two of the deacons, however, were unwilling to sign this minute.

That the dispute in the church had become serious is indicated by the fact that in June of 1849 the compromise of 1845 was formally renewed. The renewal was in the form of a pledge adopted by the church in which the members expressed their gratitude that the compromise gave them their mutual rights and privileges and yet made union and co-operation possible, and in which they further agreed neither individually nor collectively to seek to nullify its arrangements. At best this declaration merely arrested the contest. In the next year it was necessary to appoint a committee to look into the difficulties of the college and to compose the quarrel between Blanchard and Gale. A partial conciliation, confessedly disappointing because Gale rebuffed a mutual paper in the "nature of a confession," was all that could be effected. That same fall there took place before the session of the church a trial which reveals the bitter spirit which had come to prevail. One C. W. Gilbert was cited to an-

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swer the charge of "refusing to walk with the brethren of this church." The evidence brought out the facts that on one occasion he had left the church when he perceived that Blanchard was to take part in the service, and that he had accused Blanchard of trying to change the government of the church and of saying he would change the denominational character of the college "within a year." Other testimony asserted that Gilbert accused Blanchard of a bad temper, "gross falsehood," "wanton and malicious slander," and conduct that was "black as hell." Gilbert's chief defense was that what he said was true. The session sustained the charges against Gilbert, and suspended him until he gave evidence of repentance. Significantly, however, in condemning Gilbert for unbrotherly conduct, the session specifically refused to commit itself as to the truth of what he had confessedly said against Blanchard. It was on the ground that evidence should have been taken as to the truth of Gilbert's accusations that the presbytery, on Gilbert's appeal of the case, in April, 1852, removed the suspension against him and substituted a "rebuke" in its place.

The final phase of the Gilbert trial, which must have done much to stir up feeling, was not yet completed when the first steps toward the split in the church, which Gale had anticipated at least as early as 1849, were finally consummated. The leaders of the Presbyterian party suggested a separation with the "express purpose of having a strictly Presbyterian Church." Repeated meetings were held of those interested in such a departure, and a committee was appointed in April, 1851, to present the subject to the Knox and Peoria Presbytery, which was in session at Knoxville. The presbytery appointed Gale, and the pastor of the First Presbyterian Church, and one other as committee to organize such a church. On May 26 the First Church received a petition for dismissal from persons interested in forming a "Second Presbyterian Church." The petition frankly stated the difference over church government as a ground for dismissal. Three days later the petition was granted. The committee appointed by the presbytery met the same day, received letters of dismissal, and organized the new church.

### IV.

At the time the separation of 1851 took place the town was entering upon a remarkable boom. Between 1850 and 1855 the population increased to almost three thousand. In the spring of the latter year it was anticipated that at least three hundred new buildings would go up before

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cold weather. Some newcomers to the First Presbyterian Church found it filled to overflowing already in the winter of 1854-1855, and learned that they as recent adherents were to help form a new church which because of the overcrowding was to colonize out of the old. When in September of 1855 the Rev. Edward Beecher (a founder of Illinois College, and one of the Illinois New School leaders prosecuted by the Old School in the Presbyterian courts before the schism of 1838) preached in the First Presbyterian Church, it was understood that he was to settle permanently in Galesburg and become pastor of the new church shortly to be organized. That this new church would be Congregational in its polity was, all things considered, to be expected. It had already in 1851, immediately after the departure of those especially enamoured of Presbyterianism been proposed that the mother church change to a wholly Congregational mode of government. Though the proposal was not sustained, the Congregational element in the church had become steadily more preponderant, until in 1855 they outnumbered those admitted as Presbyterians (and still in the church) almost two to one. The Congregational disposition was perhaps further aggravated by the fact that many Presbyterians were discontented with their denomination because it seemed too tolerant of slavery. On October 2, 1855, a Congregational Society was formed, and on the ninth of the next month those interested organized themselves into the First Congregational Church. Forty-seven members were immediately dismissed from the older church to its most recent daughter, to be followed during the next thirty months with over eighty more.

The separation appears to have been entirely amicable, caused directly by the overcrowded condition of the original congregation. Church government could hardly have been a motive when Blanchard remained in the mother church, nor could there have been serious disapproval of that congregation's attitude toward slavery, for it had already taken steps to separate from the presbytery on that issue. The relations of the two churches were decidedly friendly from the beginning: for more than a year the meetings of the First Congregational Church were held in the session room of the First Presbyterian Church; the pastor of the former, Dr. Beecher, took part in the ordination and installation of a new pastor for the latter in the spring of 1857; and both churches combined their services under Beecher for a time in 1858.

Meanwhile, in 1854, there had been organized another Presbyterian

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church. Its beginnings were, so far as ascertainable, completely separate from the three other churches that had been formed from the original colony congregation. In fact, it was an Old School Presbyterian Church. Conservative in theology and polity, it was also set on keeping the heated politics of the day out of its church life. Until near the end of the Civil War it was a small, struggling organization, receiving aid from the Old School board of domestic missions.

One more fundamental development occurred during the pre-Civil War history of the Puritan Churches in Galesburg. That was the complete Congregationalizing of the original colony church. It had begun as Presbyterian, it compromised with Congregationalism, it had dismissed from its midst first, a Presbyterian, and then a Congregational church, and now finally it became completely Congregational itself. The immediate cause for this change was the slavery issue. Since that will be the topic of the next lecture, this change in the mother church will be dealt with at that time.

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# The Galesburg Colony and the Anti-Slavery Movement

## LECTURE V

### I.

**D**URING the years 1819 to 1824 the Reverend George Washington Gale was pastor of a Congregational-Presbyterian church in Adams, Jefferson County New York. In that town was a lawyer by the name of Charles Grandison Finney, who, during Gale's pastorate, had a profound religious experience. Believing he had a retainer from the Lord he resolved to preach, and the presbytery of that region appointed Gale as his teacher in theology. Finney was ordained in July, 1824.

He quickly became a great evangelist. Under his influence there began another of those great revivals that periodically swept the nation. The more conservative ministers criticized some of his revival methods, and an important council of such nationally-known Presbyterian ministers as Dr. Lyman Beecher was held at Lebanon to try to compose the controversy which arose. Gale, though not entirely in accord with some of Finney's religious ideas, was convinced of the value of the spiritual renaissance which he had provoked, and used his influence in his behalf at Lebanon as well as at other times. The two men were then and remained close friends.

The moral enthusiasm of the revival manifested itself in reform movements such as "temperance" and "anti-slavery." Many young men who were later important agitators for these reforms were converted at this time by Finney. Chief of these was Theodore Dwight Weld, who recently has been credited by some historians with being more important than even William Lloyd Garrison in the early years of the anti-slavery movement. Weld was then a young man living at Utica, New York, in the same general locality as the group that formed the Galesburg colony. He was converted by Finney in 1825, and soon became the most important member of a group of Finney's young converts that formed themselves into a "holy band" of auxiliary evangelists. Weld and Finney be-

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came very dear friends indeed.

In 1827 Weld entered Oneida Manual Labor Institute, the new school just established at Whitesboro, New York, by George Washington Gale. With him he brought a large number of enthusiastic converts like himself. At Oneida Institute he was more than a student, for during the three years he was there he became monitor-general and manager of the school farm, and acted as an agent for the institution. With Gale, at whose home he lived, his relations seem to have been of a very cordial nature. They were intimate enough for the elder man to open a letter from Finney to Weld and to add a post-script of his own.

Much of the great influence which Weld later exerted on the anti-slavery movement seems to have come from his genius for earning friendships of the most fervent kind. His leadership among the students at Oneida Institute is an example of his remarkable faculty in this regard. Among his wide circle of friends outside the Institute was the man who was later to be the first president of Knox College, Hiram Huntington Kellogg. But more important for the history of the nation was the acquaintance Weld formed with the Tappan brothers, one of whom, Lewis Tappan, had two sons attending Oneida Institute. The Tappans were wealthy New York City philanthropists who patronized benevolent enterprises such as missions, education, and anti-slavery agitation.

In the early thirties one of the "reform" movements in which the Tappans were interested was the introduction of "manual labor" into educational institutions. Of the schools which had embraced this educational principle the Oneida Institute seems to have been the most widely known in the clique that supported the educational organizations and edited the educational periodicals of that time. In 1831 a Society for Promoting Manual Labour in Literary Institutions was formed in New York, with Gale and certain eastern reformers such as Lewis Tappan among the officers. Weld was made the traveling agent of this society with a double commission: one to promote the introduction of manual labor in educational institutions, the other to select a site in the West for a manual labor theological seminary which would help supply the need for ministers in the new settlements. While traveling on this mission in New York, Ohio, Kentucky, Tennessee, Missouri, and Oklahoma, Weld also did a great deal of agitation for the abolition of slavery, then still a very radical idea. He converted several important persons to an outright espousal of this principle—among them Beriah Green, then a teacher at Western Reserve

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but soon head of Oneida Institute, and James G. Birney, first candidate for President of the United States on an anti-slavery ticket.

Weld decided on Lane Theological Seminary in Cincinnati as the place where the projected manual labor school should be located. Lyman Beecher was secured as the president. The largest group of the students was supplied by Weld from western New York, among them many of his former fellow students at Oneida Institute. As a group they were well enough identified to be called the "Oneida party" or the "Oneidas."

When the board of trustees of Lane forbade public discussion of the anti-slavery question by the students, the "Oneidas" and many others withdrew from the school. Among these "Lane Rebels," as they were called, was Lucius H. Parker, who was later pastor of the Galesburg colony church, and prominent in anti-slavery activities in the state of Illinois. While in Cincinnati he met William Holyoke, one of the abolitionists of the city. Mrs. Holyoke was a cousin of the Quaker abolitionist, John Greenleaf Whittier. Parker married their daughter, who had attended a school conducted by Harriet Beecher Stowe. Soon after the marriage the Holyokes moved to Galesburg, to which they were attracted by meeting members of a canal boat party which stopped in Cincinnati in the summer of 1836 while on the way to Illinois. In Illinois, William Holyoke became a prominent leader of the anti-slavery crusade.

There is some reason to believe that William Holyoke was one of those who gave financial assistance to the "Lane Rebels" while they were looking for a school which would meet their anti-slavery demands. Such a school was discovered at Oberlin. The Parkers later attended this notorious abolitionist institution. Finney became a teacher there.

In the meantime, the American anti-slavery movement had gained momentum. The American Anti-Slavery Society determined to expend less of its resources on literature and instead to send out a band of "seventy" to do evangelical work for the cause. Weld, assisted by another "Lane Rebel," Henry B. Stanton, and by John Greenleaf Whittier, was asked to recruit the "seventy" from the "Lane Rebels" and other likely students at colleges and theological seminaries. He returned to Whitesboro, where Oneida Institute was located, and arranged for many of his agitators by correspondence. Among the most outstanding of the agents thus selected and sent out in 1836 was Jonathan Blanchard, later to be the second president of Knox, and "stormy petrel" in the history of Galesburg. Blanchard did great work for abolitionism in Pennsylvania in the face of violent

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opposition. While there on this mission he made the acquaintance and earned the life-long friendship of Thaddeus Stevens.

Meanwhile, changes had occurred at Oneida Institute. In 1833 Beriah Green had come there on the condition that he was to be completely free to pursue his anti-slavery principles. That condition he tested by acting as president of the convention at which the American Anti-Slavery Society was organized in December, 1833. Moreover, in 1835 he participated in a state anti-slavery convention at Utica, not far from Whitesboro, at which he and one of the Tappans and other abolitionists were mobbed. By that time, however, Gale had severed his connections with Oneida Institute, and the formation of the Galesburg colony was already under way.

### II.

It is evident that the founders of Galesburg were deeply involved in the early stage of the anti-slavery movement before they left the East. Furthermore, they became at once active workers for abolitionism as soon as they had come to the West. Their first houses were hardly built and the sod of their new prairie farms very recently broken when in the summer of 1837 the Reverend Elijah Lovejoy, a Presbyterian, pled in his abolitionist paper for the organization of an Illinois anti-slavery society. In response two hundred and forty-five people in the state endorsed a call for a convention in Upper Alton for that purpose. Forty-four, or almost one-fifth, of the signers were residents of the year-old settlement of Galesburg. Practically all of these were members of the church, and eight of them were trustees of Knox College. Only one other community in the state had more signers to the call than the new colony in Knox County.

It was perhaps in the initiation of the Illinois Anti-Slavery Society that the town had its first association with the famous Beecher family. The Rev. Edward Beecher, then serving as the first president of Knox's sister college at Jacksonville, was deep in the counsels of Lovejoy, and very prominent in the convention that formed the society. He stayed for part of the aftermath, and helped Lovejoy guard a new press for his hated abolitionist paper on the night before the latter's martyrdom. This Beecher later became pastor in Galesburg of the Congregational church that colonized out of the original church in 1855, and he had a most boisterous part in the Congregational-Presbyterian row over control of Knox College in the late fifties. He was a brother to the author of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, part of which was written in his home, and to Henry Ward

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Beecher after whom the rifles sent to keep the soil of Kansas free were called "Beecher's Bibles." Henry Ward Beecher was in Galesburg in 1858 and donated the proceeds from some lectures to help rebuild his brother's church, which had been seriously damaged by a storm. Another brother of this remarkable family, the Rev. Charles Beecher, was professor of rhetoric at Knox College in 1856-1857 and was also involved in the college controversy of that time. He had previously been pastor of the Free Presbyterian (later First Congregational Church) of Newark, New Jersey, where his anti-slavery views separated him and his church from the fellowship of the other churches in the city. While there he had in 1851 published *The Duty of Disobedience to Wicked Laws, a Sermon on the Fugitive Slave Law*.

The first settlers had a surprisingly active part in the earliest attempt to make the slavery question an issue in Illinois politics. It is hardly conceivable that any other community in the state could have been more prominent than the three year old settlement at Galesburg was in the leadership of the third annual session of the Illinois Anti-Slavery Society held July 4, 1840, at Princeton. The president of the society, William Holyoke, was from Galesburg. At this meeting he was elected one of the managers. George Washington Gale, who was there with his son, William Selden, was elected recording secretary; and Hiram Marsh, also from the Galesburg colony, was elected a vice-president. Two of these Galesburg people were trustees of Knox College and all were members of the First Church. At this annual meeting of the society slavery was of course denounced as undermining the civil and religious liberties and as threatening the ruin of the nation. More important, however, was the denunciation of the presidential nominees of the major parties as either pro-slavery in sentiment or slave holders in fact. The society, like others elsewhere, was as yet unwilling to commit itself to definite political alignments, but on July Fifth a separate meeting was called and the nominees of the new Liberty Party were endorsed. By this action was put forth the first electoral ticket in any state of the Northwest which presented a candidate for president on an anti-slavery platform. William Holyoke of Galesburg was appointed a presidential elector on the party ticket.

Such radical support of the anti-slavery side was then rare, for even persons with anti-slavery opinions were often unwilling to further their sentiments through political affiliations based entirely on that issue. In all Illinois only 160 votes were cast for the Liberty Party in the election

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of 1840. Of that small band of extremists, eleven, or seven percent of the whole, belonged to the Galesburg church, one of them being its pastor, the Rev. Horatio Foote. The hopes of these abolitionists, dashed perhaps by the small vote of 1840, were quickened by the results of an anti-slavery convention of the third congressional district held at Galesburg in January, 1841. The man nominated at that convention, though not elected, got a total vote of about 500, sufficient to give the anti-slavery voters the balance of power in the district, and more than double the Liberty Party of the entire state in the previous year. This candidate was the only abolition nominee in Illinois put up in this congressional election, and the result did much to encourage and arouse interest in the anti-slavery cause in the northern part of the state. The next year Liberty conventions were held in no less than eleven counties of the state, one of them in Knox County with William Holyoke as chairman and speaker, and with Eli Farnham, also a member of the First Church and shortly also a trustee of Knox College, as secretary.

Knox County became that locality in Illinois which seemed most possessed of the desire to help the slaves by way of the underground railway, and Galesburg developed into what was probably the principal underground depot in Illinois. No less than five routes came to it from the south, and four left it to the north. Tradition has it that the cupola of the First Church was upon occasion one of the hiding places. The homesteads of two of its members were the chief stations of the railway in the community. The sometimes pastor of that church, President Blanchard, was himself willing, if need be, to escort a fugitive along the route to Stark County, where he would be received by others similarly inclined to help him toward freedom.

The church to which these leaders in the anti-slavery crusade belonged was quite as militant as they were. Opposition to slavery was a condition of membership from the first, and contribution to the anti-slavery cause was in the very beginning quite casually listed as a benevolent enterprise on a par with missionary and similar organizations. Furthermore, if any missionary, Sunday School, tract, or similar society proved unsound on slavery, contributions to it were stopped. In giving a letter of dismissal to a member who had settled in a slave state, warning was added lest a new membership be established in a "slave-holding" church.

Knox College also was a distinctly anti-slavery institution. Its first president, Hiram Huntington, Kellogg, also at two different times pastor

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of the church, had been principal in New York of a decidedly abolitionist school. His departure for Galesburg had been regretted because it was almost the only institution at which colored pupils could be received "on an equality with those of fairer complexions." One of the chief donors to Knox during its early years had selected it with Oberlin for his benevolences because "there was then great effort to break down everything like abolition and anti-slavery colleges . . . [and] they were likely to lose their share of assistance because of their advocacy of practical Christianity."<sup>1</sup> In 1853 a donation of eighteen quarter sections of land was made to the college on condition that "anti-slavery morality" be taught.

The coming of Jonathan Blanchard as second president of the college, and also for a time as pastor of the church, added a tower of strength to the local anti-slavery citadel. His membership in the famous "seventy" has already been mentioned. Later he continued his education under Lyman Beecher at Lane Theological Seminary and became acquainted with the Beecher clan that still remained with their mighty sire in the city of Cincinnati. In 1843, with endorsements which included those of Salmon P. Chase, he was sent as a delegate to the second World Anti-Slavery Convention in England, and was elected an American vice-president by this body. While at this convention he met President Kellogg of Knox College who was attending as delegate from the Illinois Anti-Slavery Society.

In 1845, just before Blanchard came to Galesburg to assume his duties as the second president of Knox, he was chosen by the abolitionists of Cincinnati to debate on slavery against a nationally-known Old School Presbyterian minister. The debate was one of those histrionic feats of that time which it is difficult to conceive of today. It comprised thirty speeches and lasted four days. The debates, when published in a volume of considerable size, went through many editions. The reputation which it gave his name caused his wife considerable worry when on the way to Galesburg. In order to avoid desecrating the Sabbath by travel it was necessary to get off the boat on slave territory at Cape Girardeau, Missouri. She was afraid that her husband's name on their baggage would reveal them as the family of the notorious abolitionist of the then recently published "Debate on Slavery."

The local church, when Blanchard came, was no doubt finding the

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<sup>1</sup>J. P. Williston to Southwick Davis, July 27, 1857, Northampton, Mass., *Galesburg [Daily] Free Democrat*, August 8, 1857.

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declared attitude of the Congregationalists on slavery completely congenial. In 1844 the Illinois Association of that denomination had made it a standing rule, to which its members must assent, that "no one shall be admitted to membership in this body who does not regard slaveholding as a sin condemned of God."<sup>1</sup> As regards Presbyterians the situation was more complicated. Already before the schism of 1838 that issue was troubling the counsels of the sect. While the conflict over church government was the fundamental cause of the split, the slavery question did perhaps contribute to it. Even before the separation a Presbyterian leader from the Carolinas had expressed the hope that if a division must come the Mason and Dixon line be the place of cleavage. Lyman Beecher later regretted that it had not so happened, for at least the unity in the North would have been preserved, and that section of the church then have "thrown all slavery over-board." As it was, the elder Beecher blamed the South for the less satisfactory secession that did take place, for the South which had been neutral as between the New School and the Old "got scared about abolition" and finally took the Old School side. Certain synods which the Old School wished to purge in 1837 because of their liberal religious practices were also the synods which alarmed the South because of their anti-slavery tendencies.

The New School denomination was clearly more anti-slavery than the Old School. Harriet Beecher Stowe's husband believed that the "alliance between the Old School and slaveholders will make more abolitionists than anything that has been done yet." A friend, who wrote to G. W. Gale in 1837, expressed his joy at the prospect of making the now footloose New School a tremendous anti-slavery influence. On the first anniversary of the murder of Lovejoy (November 7, 1838), the Knox Presbytery was set up in Galesburg by order of the New School Synod of Illinois. In commemoration of the day, anti-slavery resolutions were adopted by the new presbytery which not only quoted certain old enactments of the denomination to the effect that slavery was wrong, but asserted that "the church ought to take speedy and decisive measures to purify itself from this long continued and enormous evil." What was meant, of course, was that the central legislative body and courts of the sect should cut off from fellowship all slaveholders who were still members of the denomination.

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<sup>1</sup>T. C. Pease, *The Frontier State, 1818-1848, Centennial History of Illinois*, II, 420.



## III.

Nevertheless, almost a score of years later the suggestion made by the Knox Presbytery in 1838 and actually practiced by the Congregationalists of the state, had not been acceded to by the highest tribunal of New School Presbyterianism. It was much more difficult for the New School Presbyterians to be recklessly radical on the question of religious relations with slave-holders than it was for their Congregational confederates, for the former denomination had presbyteries and synods in the slave-holding states under the jurisdiction of the General Assembly, while the latter had no such connections with the institutions of slavery. The Presbyterians, therefore, had to deal with the issue as a practical matter which deserved "a careful consideration of all the circumstances under which their southern brethren were placed." To the Congregationalists, on the contrary, it was so far as ecclesiastical affairs were concerned merely a question of "speculative morals," and it was easy for them to demand immediate and extreme action, and to denounce as moral cowardice or corrupt temporizing with sin the cautious steps of the New School Presbyterians. Under the circumstances the issue of slavery became a disruptive element as between the two denominations.

President Blanchard's activities after he came to Illinois did a great deal to drive the slavery wedge between the two denominations. In 1847 he led the fight at the annual meeting of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions in favor of refusing to receive slave-holders into the mission churches. This fight he sustained until hope of winning it had to be given up. The American Board was the agency for conducting foreign missions in conjunction with Congregationalists which the New School had defended against the Old School. The New School Presbyterians of Northern Illinois were not now willing to cast it aside because of Blanchard's or other Congregationalists' objections to its slavery connections. This attitude was evinced by the action of the Peoria Synod in reply to an overture received by it in October, 1851, which asked whether the American Board and its sister society, the American Home Missionary Society, were so involved in the guilt of sustaining slavery as to forfeit claim to the confidence and support of the members of the synod. The answer of the latter body was that in its opinion these two benevolent organizations did not have "any such relation to slavery as to imply approbation of it," and that they deserved the confidence of the members of the synod. The question was still a subject for

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action in 1852, but consideration of it was postponed to 1853, when the matter died in a committee. The chairman of the committee was the man who in 1858 supplanted Blanchard as president of Knox College after the latter had been ousted by the Presbyterian party in the board of trustees.

In 1850 there appeared public manifestation of uneasiness among the more radical New School Presbyterians of the state concerning the continued slavery connections of their sect. That year certain clergymen of that group together with Congregationalists held a state convention to consider union of the Illinois Congregational associations and New School presbyteries. It was called with approval of Blanchard and a number of prominent ministers, including the Rev. Flavel Bascom, a distinguished leader in the Peoria Synod and moderator of that body four years before. Bascom had been since 1845 a trustee of Knox College, and in January, 1850, had become pastor of the Galesburg First Presbyterian Church. The movement which this convention represented was intended to "deliver those of us who are Presbyterian from an ecclesiastical connection with slave-holders, through the General Assembly, and enable us to withdraw Christian fellowship from them."

Another incident revealing the desire to break off religious associations with slavery was the Christian Anti-Slavery Convention which was held in Cincinnati in April, 1850. An Illinois branch of this society, which had as a distinguishing characteristic this principle of no Christian fellowship with slave-holders, was organized. In July, 1851, a national convention of this movement was held in Chicago, the arrangements being made by a general committee appointed at the Cincinnati convention. Blanchard was a member of this committee. At the Chicago convention there were two hundred and fifty delegates, "fanatics and enemies of the country" according to the regular papers, of whom one hundred and thirty were from Illinois and sixty of these Congregationalists. Blanchard was chosen president of the convention.

On this matter of fellowship with slave-holders it should, in fairness to the New School Presbyterians of northern Illinois, be said that at one time it appeared as if the wishes of the extremists were to be fulfilled. The Peoria Synod at its first session in 1843 had resolved that it was a duty of the churches in its jurisdiction "to exclude from their pulpits and their communion all who practiced the sin of slave-holding, and who persist in refusing to put away this iniquity." It was recommended to the

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presbyteries of the synod that they carry out this principle and enjoin it on their churches. At the same time the synod resolved against recognition of all government laws which were contrary to the law of God, among them the state law against assisting fugitive slaves. Two years later the synod requested the General Assembly to take a definite stand on the issue by making a "full and unequivocal expression of their belief that 'Slave-holding' is a violation of the eighth commandment." And in 1848 the synod, declaring its wish to take such action as would clear it "of all participation in the sin and guilt of slavery," asked the General Assembly to use all of its power so as to relieve the denomination from the just imputation of sustaining any such relation to the practice of holding slaves as "can fairly be regarded as implying approbation of it." The Assembly was requested, therefore, to enjoin upon all the presbyteries and churches in slave territory that they treat slavery as they would all other gross immoralities.

Had the petition of the Peoria Synod in 1848 been obeyed by the General Assembly the discontent of the radical anti-slavery members of the denomination would have been allayed, and the criticisms of Congregationalists such as Blanchard would have been stopped. It is true that the General Assembly of 1850 declared that holding slaves should be disciplined "as other offenses" by the churches, but the practical effect of that pronouncement was vitiated by excepting from its operation those cases where slave-holding was "unavoidable, from the laws of the state, the obligations of guardianship, or the demands of humanity." Significantly, the Peoria Synod did not again press the matter. In fact, while the New School Presbyterians of Illinois were generally in agreement on the wrong of slavery, they were divided as to whether fellowship should be denied to slave-holders. While the Peoria Synod continued to express abhorrence of the evil, denounced the Fugitive Slave Law, and showed sympathy for the hardships of the free soil party in Kansas, the general impression given by its proceedings after 1850 is that of less zeal for anti-slavery agitation and more concern over the dissensions within the denomination caused by that question. One prominent member of that synod, George Washington Gale, seems certainly to have modified his earlier reckless ardour for anti-slavery agitation. When, how, or why the change came it is not possible to discern with any degree of clarity. Whether his third wife, whom he married in 1847, was an influence to change her husband's attitude is not capable of demonstra-

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tion, but it is significant that when she presented for admission to the Galesburg church a letter from an Old School Presbyterian church in St. Louis, her reception into the local congregation was deferred "on account of her peculiar views on the subject of slavery." A committee headed by Blanchard was appointed to "confer" with her on the subject. Three weeks later the church received a note from her expressing her obligation to the committee for the kind and faithful manner in which it had done its duty, and declaring that after a "candid and prayerful consideration of the subject of slavery" she felt that it was a violation of the commandment, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." Her conclusion was, however, less conciliatory: "Farther than this I am not prepared to go, and if the church still hesitate to receive me, I wish to withdraw the request and the letter."<sup>1</sup> The committee reported favorably and she was admitted into the church. It is quite conceivable that abiding at bed and board with such a spirit may have modified Gale's anti-slavery attitude.

The change is perhaps revealed in the proceedings of the Peoria Synod. Gale was a member of the committee of that tribunal which in 1848 memorialized the General Assembly to enjoin the presbyteries of the south to treat slavery like any other gross sin. But in 1853 another committee of which he was chairman brought in what was decidedly the weakest report on slavery ever adopted by the synod. Considered as to its possible disturbance of the harmony within the denomination, it was like milk and water compared to the strong dose prescribed in 1848. Another development which took place during these years may be either symptom or cause of his decreasing anti-slavery radicalism. By 1851 he had become chairman of a committee which was projecting a New School Presbyterian Theological seminary for the Northwest. He hoped to have it located in Galesburg and to give to it the lands set aside for theological purposes by the founders of Knox College. According to the scheme the presbyteries of the slave-holding state of Missouri were to be represented in the control of the seminary.

By 1849 the difference between Blanchard and Gale, between Congregationalism which would have no compromise with slavery, and Presbyterianism which would be more cautious, evinced itself in a struggle for control of the board of trustees of Knox College. The clash of the two men, as Blanchard conceded, was primarily due to their separate denominational connections, but it was also brought on by Blanchard's anti-

<sup>1</sup>*Records of First Church*, pp. 75-76.

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slavery activities, particularly his very recent relations to the Free Soil Party.

In the formation of this new anti-slavery party in 1848, Galesburg and the First Presbyterian Church had a direct share, for one of the nine delegates sent by the older Liberty Party from Illinois to the Buffalo convention which organized the Free Soil Party was the Rev. Lucius H. Parker, who had in 1845 been pastor of that church. In Illinois the Free Soil Party put Blanchard on the ticket as presidential elector and he addressed a great mass meeting in Knox County in favor of that party.

In April of 1849 Gale moved to strengthen his party in the college board of trustees by having his son and O. H. Browning, a Whig lawyer from Quincy, elected members. Blanchard was convinced that in this action Gale was prompted in part at least by the former's recent anti-slavery activities. Furthermore, Blanchard was convinced that the meeting was improperly called and illegal. At the June meeting of the board the Blanchard party was strong enough to prevent the seating of the new trustees. When the Gale party withdrew in protest the Blanchard faction elected six new members whom he described to Salmon P. Chase as "good, honest, upright Anti-Slavery men, every one of whom but one, I know, vote against slavery, and that one did not vote against *Free Soil*."<sup>1</sup> For a while serious litigation threatened between the two parties in the board, but fortunately, this was avoided by a compromise made in March, 1850, which created a balance of power between Congregationalists and Presbyterians.

This rift in the college was closely connected with the separation from the Galesburg First Presbyterian Church in 1851 of its more strictly Presbyterian members. Seven of the trustees of the Gale party who were also members of that church joined him that year in forming the Second Presbyterian Church. It is significant that it was not until 1851 that the Galesburg First Presbyterian Church requested that the presbytery to which it belonged make its connection with the General Assembly depend upon the action of the latter with regard to slavery. Obviously, this was an expression of that principle of no fellowship with slave-holders for which Blanchard had agitated in the American Board, and in the Christian Anti-Slavery Conventions, and which he had supported with the pastor of the Galesburg First Church, the Rev. Flavel Bascom, through the Chi-

<sup>1</sup>Jonathan Blanchard to Salmon P. Chase, June 30, 1849 (photo-static copy of letter in Henry Seymour Library).

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cago convention of New School Presbyterians and Congregationalists in 1850.

The First Church continued for several years to worry its presbytery by expressing dissatisfaction over the cautious procedure of the General Assembly; for it was still possible in June, 1855, for an anti-slavery paper in Galesburg to quote at length from an article in the *Congregational Herald* which took that tribunal to task for only "feebly" condemning slavery and doing nothing against it. In the spring of 1853 the church requested its session to send no delegate to the presbytery until it had satisfied the Galesburg congregation that the former would "forsake the Assembly unless the Assembly forsakes slavery." The next December, however, the church learned that the presbytery was willing to act on a memorial on slavery sent to it, whenever that document was called up by a delegate from the local church. It was voted, therefore, that a delegate be sent to the presbytery the succeeding April.

The presbytery's action on the slavery memorial was unsatisfactory to the Galesburg church. The matter was referred to a committee, and the recommendations of this committee, presented by Blanchard, were to the effect that relations with the Presbyterian system should cease. They declared that the church was unwilling to continue in ecclesiastical relations with slave-holders, and that because of the unacceptable response of the presbytery, the ruling elders of the church be requested to suspend all connections with that body so long as it continued its "ecclesiastical relations with slave-holders through the General Assembly." The session of the church responded to this request on March 19, 1855, with a resolution not to send delegates while the presbytery was in union "with a General Assembly, in which slave-holders are in fellowship." The presbytery replied the next month that the church had a duty to be represented in the presbytery and could not be released by any action of its own. In September, the pastor of the church, the Rev. Flavel Bascom (formerly a leader in the Peoria Synod, but now admitted to the presbytery which was part of that synod as a "corresponding member" from the Congregationalist Central Association of Illinois) presented a request from his church that it be released from all further connections with the presbytery. This request was granted at the next meeting, and on April 11, 1856, the Knox Presbytery erased the First Presbyterian Church in Galesburg from its rolls.

Meanwhile, that church had itself voted to withdraw from the pres-

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bytery and had declared its bonds with the tribunal dissolved. Only Congregational connections now remained to the church that had so long and so painfully maintained a dual denominationalism. A year later the word "Presbyterian" was dropped from its name, and the new title, "First Church of Christ in Galesburg," was assumed.

As it turned out, if the Galesburg First Church had been less hasty in severing its Presbyterian ties, they might have been retained for a time, at least, and perhaps permanently. For in the spring of 1857 the very action on slavery that the local congregation had demanded of the General Assembly took place. To the Assembly of that year the Knox Presbytery sent a strong memorial which reads as if some of it had been provoked by the unhappy experience with the Galesburg First Church, a surmised which seems all the more likely because the chairman of the committee which submitted the memorial was the Rev. J. W. Bailey, pastor of the Galesburg Second Presbyterian Church. The memorial expressed a hope that the General Assembly would find fit to bring about a peaceful separation from the slave-holding churches. It drew the attention of that body to the embarrassment which the slavery connection caused to the denomination in this region, pointing out: first, that "many of our churches and of our members have left us on this account"; secondly, that "many new churches are organized as Congregational churches among us, which would, from choice, have been Presbyterian had we been free from slavery"; and thirdly, that "many of our colleges and institutions of learning, founded by members of our church, have been wrested from our control on this account." The Rev. Bailey and the other members of his committee may well have had three specific Galesburg institutions in mind as they drew up these three allegations. The withdrawal from the presbytery of the First Presbyterian Church in Galesburg, with the one-time New School leader, Flavel Bascom, their pastor, was an example of the first; the formation in 1855 of the Galesburg First Congregational Church with Edward Beecher (once persecuted for his New School Presbyterianism) their pastor, was an example of the second; and the bickering between the Gale and Blanchard factions in Knox College was a manifestation of the third. That the Knox Presbytery was now finally determined to cast off slavery connections was evident from the tone of the memorial. It asked the General Assembly to commit itself one way or the other, so that if there was no hope that the central court of the denomination would expel slave-holders, the presbytery could "take such action for ourselves

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as will secure the end we desire.”

Had such an imperative demand been made by the presbytery in 1855 the Galesburg First Church might never have left it. Moreover, the denomination was as a whole soon to be freed of slave holders. The General Assembly of 1857, which received this memorial from the Knox Presbytery and similar petitions from other inferior church tribunals, witnessed the withdrawal of the southern presbyteries and synods. These formed a separate denomination of their own. New School Presbyterianism was now as free from reproach on account of slavery as was the Congregationalism with which it had once so closely confederated. Unfortunately, though one of the chief causes of alienation was now removed, the estrangement to which it had contributed could now hardly be overcome.

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# The Churches Since the Civil War

## LECTURE VI

### I.

IN 1860 there were, you remember, two Presbyterian churches (one New School, the other Old School) and two Congregational churches, one called the First Congregational and the other called the First Church of Christ. Before the century closed each denomination had united its two churches into one. The first union took place between the Presbyterians.

The Old School Presbyterian Church did not become very strong until late in its history as a separate organization. Ten years after its founding in 1854 it still needed support from the denominational Board of Domestic Missions. Beginning in the next year, 1865, it prospered more both in membership and in financial resources, partly because the church building was moved from North Cedar Street to a more "eligible location" on Simmons Street where the Republican-Register Building now stands. The congregation increased between 1864 and 1868 from 63 to 111 members, and the tiny church building, thirty-six by fifty feet, was crowded. It seems likely that the need of finding a larger building may have stimulated the idea for a union with the New School Presbyterians.

At this time there was under way a movement to bring about reunion of the two branches of Presbyterians on a national scale. The generation since the schism of 1838 had witnessed considerable liberalization of the Calvinistic theology as well as disappearance of the variation between Old School and New School politics. The New School Presbyterians were no longer in that close alliance with Congregationalists which had contributed to the separation in 1838. Whatever the reasons, in 1870 the two denominations were reunited, and in Galesburg as in many other places, individual churches were combined.

The united congregation in Galesburg continued the ministerial serv-

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ices of the New School pastor, and used the building which the New School had built. That edifice had just been completed at the cost of about \$20,000. It was located on South Cherry Street across from the court-house. This was the third building erected by the New School, two smaller temporary structures having been built at different sites at previous times.

This church constructed in 1865 served the Presbyterians over a quarter of a century. In 1890 a new pipe organ was installed. Because more room was needed there was talk in the summer of 1891 of building a gallery. Then on the last day of November, 1891, it burned. Plans for rebuilding were immediately made, and a new site at Ferris and Prairie was purchased. The new church was completed in 1893 at a total cost of over \$61,000.

### II.

Two years later the Congregationalists also combined to build a new church. In August, 1894, the pastor of the First Congregational Church resigned, and a situation propitious for discussion of union was thus created. Negotiations between the two congregations were conducted during the fall and a basis of union agreed upon. It was decided that a new congregation should be organized under the name of the Central Congregational Church, of which the communicants of the two existing churches should be charter members, and to which the property of both should be transferred. The combined church began its existence on January 1, 1895.

One of the terms of union had been that a new building should be erected on the site of the Old First Church. In December, 1895, demolition of the first church building in Galesburg began, excavation was made in 1896, the cornerstone was laid on June 10, 1897, and the first service was held in the completed building in December, 1898. The cost was approximately \$76,000.

The new buildings of both the Presbyterians and the Congregationalists were constructed in the architectural style that was in fashion during the closing years of the nineteenth century. An American art student, Henry Hobson Richardson, who shortly before the Civil War had gone to study at the Ecole des Beaux Arts in Paris, was impressed by the Romanesque buildings of medieval France and Spain. Upon his return to America he began designing buildings in that style. From about 1880 until the classic revival that followed the Chicago Columbian Exposition

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this style dominated American architecture. It was characterized by wide, squat arches; thick walls of rough stone; short, heavy pillars; bulky buttresses; and a general sense of heaviness. Many of the buildings designed by Richardson are pleasing architecturally, but the same may not be said of hundreds of others built by his less competent imitators. However, the Presbyterian and Congregational churches, particularly the latter, are rather more happy manifestations of this style than others of the same period built in the Middle West.

While the great pile of rain-drop sand-stone from Marquette, Michigan, was being built into the Central Church, the united congregation was most of the time using the so-called "Brick Church," formerly the place of worship for the First Congregational Church. Already in 1895, however, steps were being taken to transfer this structure to Knox College for \$10,000. Of this amount \$5,500 was in payment from the college, and the rest a donation to that institution by the united church. The college named this building *Beecher Chapel*. The name was very fitting, for the congregation which had built and used it had always been especially proud of its association with the famous Beecher family. For the first fifteen years its pastor had been Dr. Edward Beecher. In 1863 the church had voted to send him and another delegate across the continent to Georgetown, Massachusetts, to the heresy trial of a brother, Charles Beecher, former member of the Knox faculty. When three of the grandchildren of Lyman Beecher, sire of the clan, drowned in Massachusetts in 1865, the incident was inscribed on the local church records. The death of Henry Ward Beecher in 1887 was marked by spreading on the journal of the church a record of the signal assistance he had given to the church in its early years. It was probably regarded as not irrelevant that in 1870, shortly before he resigned, the aged Edward Beecher should answer accusations of absent-mindedness with the statement that "it is a family trait," caused by "concentration of thought" which "has its advantages as well as attendant ills."

### III.

The last lecture carried the story of the Galesburg churches within the shadow of the Civil War. Not only in time but also in mood, for the secession of New School Presbyterianism along the Mason-Dixon line in 1857 was another of those sectional developments which cumulatively had been dividing the United States into two nations for many years before political secession of the South occurred during the winter and

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spring of 1860-1861.

The war came. However one might have kept the ecclesiastical and civil elements in his life separate before, the two were thoroughly scrambled by the inexorable stirrings of the nation at war. Notices of what was going on intruded themselves into the church records, ordinarily quite free from references to the outside world. The fact that the Old School Presbyterian Church had stood before the war for a "pure gospel . . . , unmingled with the exciting political topics of the day" did not save one of its ruling elders from a long, wearisome, and painful death of disease contracted in the army.

During the first few enthusiastic months of the war the community filled its quota of troops without resorting to the large bounties that the city council later offered. At first the president's call for volunteers was answered more rapidly than they could be taken care of decently. The commandant at Cairo, Illinois, found himself overwhelmed with raw, home-sick and fever-smitten soldiers. The call to send them comfort and to bring them care was voiced, among many other places, in the First Congregational Church by its pastor, Edward Beecher, whose family had done so much to bring about this "irrepressible conflict." Though his congregation responded liberally with material contributions, the most important aid which went out from their midst was Mrs. Mary Bickerdyke, who had joined the church in April the year before.

"Mother Bickerdyke," it is interesting to note in view of references made in the last lecture, had been a student at Oberlin, where she had been infected with the liberal and humanitarian ideals maintained there by Charles G. Finney. In 1856 she and her family came to Galesburg, then booming because of the new railroad. By 1861 she had been for three years a widow, and was listed in the city directory as a "botanic physician." She went to Cairo to minister to the neglected recruits and thus entered upon a celebrated career as war nurse of which the First Congregational Church was proud. Eventually, she was put on the roll of "permanent absentees," for after the war other interests kept her away. Among them was an enterprise for settling war veterans in the lands of Kansas. At least once before her death she was back in Galesburg, for one Sunday in November, 1874, she appeared in the Old First Church in behalf of Kansas sufferers from grass-hoppers.

Mother Bickerdyke was, of course, only a more signal manifestation of what all the churches were contributing through such organizations as

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the Soldiers' Aid Societies, Sanitary Fairs, and the Christian Commission. Finally came the fall of Richmond, the meeting at Appomatox Court House, and the surrender of Lee. Then, on the fourth anniversary of the capitulation of Fort Sumter, Lincoln was shot. In the Galesburg city council the vengeful hope was expressed that no executive clemency would now be extended to the South.

The long, painful, and partisan years followed in which an attempt, rather blind, was made to secure for the negro the liberties for which the Welds, the Blanchards, the Beechers, and their kind had contended. In January, 1870, the state of Mississippi was readmitted to the union, and there appeared in the United States Senate a dusky figure, half Indian, half negro, to take the place of Jefferson Davis. His name, Hiram R. Revels, must have sounded familiar to some Galesburg people, for his wife had for a few short months in 1857 been a member of the Old School Presbyterian church, and it is probable, though not yet certain, that Revels himself was attending Knox College at that time. Unfortunately, the somewhat illusory ideals of the abolitionists were horribly corrupted by the partisan purposes of the Radical Republicans, and many decent men, like Revels, though colored, were impelled to aid in excluding from southern affairs the white men of the North who, if purer in motive, might have begun a solution of the American race problem. Those who had been aroused by the simpler need for the dark man's legal freedom, were less concerned with the more complex necessity for social and economic emancipation. As the "Reconstruction" years passed the conscience calloused. One no longer reads in the church records of the '80s and '90s that some of the members of Old First Church are helping conduct a colored Sunday School. Though there were occasional references to donations to schools in the South, apparently by 1890 only the Presbyterian Church still listed Freedmen's Aid among its regular benevolences. The relations of the two races remained in the twentieth century "old" but "unfinished business" while negro slums developed within a five-minute walk of the college of such abolitionists as Kellogg, Blanchard, and Holyoke.

### IV.

The Puritan manners and morals of the founders also were eventually overwhelmed, but not so soon. The church records down to the nineties still contain occasional references to members who were excommunicated or suspended for disorderly conduct, profanity, covenant breaking,

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"refusing to walk with any church," lewd behavior, frequenting houses of ill repute, keeping a saloon, violating the seventh commandment, and brutal treatment of the members of one's family. In 1883 a member of the First Congregational Church who had been under arrest for theft was dropped from the church rolls even though he had been acquitted by the civil court.

On one matter, it is happy to note, the Puritan severity was relaxed while some of the first settlers were still alive. For many years the celebration of Christmas was taboo among them because it smacked of Catholicism and Episcopacy. Exactly when a majority of the early settlers had modified their prejudice on this matter it is impossible to ascertain, but the minutes of the First Congregational Church, perhaps the most liberal of the four Presbyterian and Congregational churches, show that in 1868, "measures were adopted to procure a Christmas tree for the Sunday School."

Sunday, however, long remained the Puritan Sabbath to them. The First Congregational Church in 1862 resolved that it was considered wrong to patronize the post-office or news-room on that day. Thirty-one years later the session of the Presbyterian Church acted to urge congressmen as well as local officials that they use their political influence to prevent the operation of the approaching World's Fair on Sunday. Much of this attitude was long maintained by law in the town. It was not until 1927 that Sunday movies were clearly legal, and the town ordinances still forbade the Sunday operation of pool and billiard tables, bowling alleys and skating rinks. In fact, even on week-days, it was not until the late 1870's, when the original generation was passing from the scene, that billiard tables and bowling alleys could legally be conducted in Galesburg.

The coming of the railroad in the middle fifties was an important event in the history of the manners of the city. The nucleus of original settlers found themselves living with a growing number of newcomers whose ways were quite different from their own. By the year 1858 the Presbyterian and Congregational churches were alarmed "in view of the rapid increase of population in this city and the fact that many will be liable to be without the means of grace, unless measures be taken to make them acquainted with the various churches of the place, and . . . secure religious instruction to such." They organized a city mission board which secured and supported a city missionary who should minister to them. In 1858 a mission school was organized and was held every Sunday in a



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car given them by the C. B. & Q. Railroad. Here it remained until 1861 when a mission chapel was built on railroad ground, where it stood until the railroad needed the site in 1866. Then it was held elsewhere. For many years the railroad gave the mission children an excursion to some pleasant spot on the line. During the hard times attending the panic of 1873 the city missionary did important social work for the destitute. In the session of the Presbyterian Church it was even suggested that he be elected city poor-master and his salary as missionary be used for direct relief. During the nineties from two to three hundred dollars was still being contributed annually by each of the two Congregational churches and by the Presbyterian Church. It should in fairness be added that early in the history of the organization the Methodists and Baptists had joined the City Mission Board and thereafter elected delegates to it.

The city mission did not succeed in converting enough of the newcomers to the ideals and manners of the founders to prevent the eventual violation of the principle laid down by the original colony that no intoxicating liquor should be sold in the community. According to available records the first petition for a license to sell intoxicating liquors was made in 1856, very shortly after the railroad was built into town. Though such petitions were still refused for sixteen years, there was nevertheless considerable illicit sale of the forbidden goods. In 1866 there was a bad riot at a place owned by one Pete Moore, when a mob of soldiers and citizens, aroused because a returned veteran had been injured there in a fight, wrecked several hundred dollars worth of property. A committee of the city council reporting on Moore's request for damages declared he should be glad he had escaped with his neck.

Such violent righteousness did not keep the community dry, however. It was said in 1868 that there were forty illegal saloons. Finally, in 1872 sales of alcoholic liquors were permitted to those who could furnish bond and a monthly license fee of fifty dollars. Except for a short period between 1874 and 1877 the city remained wet for over thirty years. By 1878 the city was getting \$9,000 a year from licenses. Three years later the county grand jury found occasion especially to condemn Galesburg for its "lewdness, crime, and intoxication."

It was not until the twentieth century that the drys were again able to get the upper hand. In 1899 and again in 1901 they won a referendum in the city, but in each case their majority was less than one percent of the total vote cast, and the city council preferred to regard the vote

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as advisory rather than mandatory and refused to change the ordinance. In 1907, Billy Sunday, the spell-binding evangelist, came to town, and the city council was specifically invited to attend the services. According to Mr. Jelliff, this series of revival meetings marked a turning point in the fight. Three thousand attended Sunday's special lectures on booze. When in 1908 a referendum was tried again, a great meeting was addressed by Sunday the night before the election. The next day the liberals were defeated by a substantial majority, and in the course of a few months the council (they took their time) repealed the license ordinance. Though the liberals won again four years later, they were overwhelmed in 1914 in the first referendum at which women voted. Galesburg remained "dry" until after the repeal of the eighteenth amendment.

### V.

It was the educational aspirations of the Congregationalists and Presbyterians who founded Galesburg that were most consistently and successfully fulfilled. Knox College did not become a sectarian school dominated by the Presbyterians; the bitter complaint that it had so become, made by Congregationalists just before the Civil War, proved mistaken. Whatever may have been definitely denominational in its official connections disappeared, but the local relations of the college were always particularly close with the Congregational and Presbyterian Churches, especially with Old First Church. It was estimated in 1887 that of the total number on the register of that church almost two-fifths had been Knox students. Two of its ministers after the Civil War were members of the college faculty.

At various times ministers of the Congregational and Presbyterian churches served on the faculty or the board of trustees of the college. After the Presbyterian Church burned in 1891 the congregation used the seminary chapel for most of its services until a new building had been completed. Knox College, on the other hand, has always frequently used the auditoriums of the Congregational and Presbyterian Churches.

The prime purpose of the founders of Knox, the training of persons to serve the Christian Church, was consistently fulfilled by the college throughout the nineteenth century. At the time of the semi-centennial, the minister of the mother church estimated that almost one-fourth of the graduates had entered the ministry. A study of the Knox alumni made near the opening of the twentieth century revealed that fifty-two of them had gone out as missionaries to the Indians or to foreign lands.

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Thirty-five of them were serving under either Congregational or Presbyterian auspices. During the twentieth century it is true that Knox, like many other institutions, has been considerably secularized, but that the old ties are not all loosed is evinced by your patience with me every first Wednesday night for the last six months.

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